



## Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

*Institutional Template*

The enclosed Quality Initiative report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel Hendrickson".

Signature of Institution's President or

Chancellor

A handwritten date "7/6/16" in blue ink.

Date

Daniel Hendrickson, S.J., Ph.D.

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Creighton University

Name of Institution

Omaha, Nebraska

City and State

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words. Quality Initiative Reports are to be submitted between September 1 of Year 7 and August 31 of Year 9 of the Open Pathway cycle. Submit the report as a PDF file to [pathways@hlcommission.org](mailto:pathways@hlcommission.org) with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

**Date:**

**Name of Institution: Creighton University      State: Nebraska**

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**Overview of the Quality Initiative**

- 1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished, and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.**

Creighton University has a diverse portfolio of academic units that includes nine schools and colleges encompassing undergraduate (traditional and non-traditional), graduate and professional students and yet a modest size institution with about 8,435 students. This diversity of schools and colleges provides some challenges in aligning structures and processes across the campus particularly around academic program review, new program planning and overall consistency of measures of institutional effectiveness.

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Quality Initiative Project (QIP) provided the institution with opportunity to move forward in developing a more mature and system-wide process of institutional effectiveness that includes a broader range of evidence, beyond finances and enrollment, that can be used for decision making. We realize, as did the panel reviewers, that this project was very ambitious, but saw all three of the initiatives in the QIP as interdependent, important, and timely. The three major initiatives within the QIP included: 1) Annual Academic Effectiveness Reporting (AEEI) based on a shared set of metrics, 2) significant revision of our traditional Academic Program Review process and implementation of a robust process with common templates, and consistent processes and actionable items, and 3) implementation of a University-wide new academic program planning process.

The major achievements in our Annual Academic Effectiveness Reporting include consensus-based metrics (listed in Table 1) that are also being used in the Academic Program Review Process. In addition, for measures that are more qualitative and tightly aligned with our institutional mission, we have collaborated with the Gallup and have two years of survey data on students and alumni that address the university experience and long term outcomes. Current and future work is now focused on connecting databases into an emerging University data warehouse.

The revised Academic Program Review process is in its third year. From 2013 to the present, we have reviewed 22 degree program from 19 departments, across four schools and colleges. The review process is coordinated through our Office of Academic Excellence and Assessment (AEA). The process is both structured and streamlined through the use of self-study guidelines, templates for each step of the process, and the use of virtual conferencing for the external reviewers. Action plans are required as part of the review process and monitored by AEA.

The New Academic Program Approval Process provides support and guidance for development of new academic programs through the Center for Academic Innovation. The new program planning process provides a streamlined mechanism for proposal development that assures links to mission, institutional capacity, work force demand/market analysis, program sustainability, comprehensive pro-forma budget planning, assessment and evaluation along with academic plans. Over the last three years, 19 new academic programs/majors have been proposed and three programs declined.

Senior leadership at Creighton recognizes the interdependence of these initiatives as the institution continues to build “organizational capacity for change” and continued progress toward institutional effectiveness and accountability.

**Scope and Impact of the Initiative**

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative’s hypotheses and findings.)

Creighton University’s QI project entailed three main initiatives that are interlinked. Each initiative has a unique utility: (1) The Annual Educational Effectiveness Indicator (AEEI) is focused on enhancing academic *planning*, by collecting and interpreting a consistent set of metrics. Part of the AEEI is a 4-year partnership with Gallup to administer the Creighton Gallup Student Survey, which is focused on *understanding* the student experience at Creighton; (2) The Academic Program Review process is focused on programmatic *evaluation*; and (3) The New Academic Program Review process is focused on making decisions based on solid planning practices and market evidence to *ensure viability* of new programs.

**Annual Educational Effectiveness Indicators (AEEI) Reporting**

The AEEI was developed to identify a set of metrics that would assist the University in accessing evidence to facilitate decision making, provide trend data for Academic Program Review (APR), and increase transparency in metrics used for quality improvement. While the metrics have been identified for the AEEI project and operational definitions have been established, current and future work is focused on connecting databases for importation and automaticity into the University’s data warehouse.

Objective	Description	Results
1. Develop a university-wide list of educational effectiveness indicators. Develop a database set identifying the metrics and minimum data set required by each program.	Metrics for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Outcomes</li> <li>• Instructional Productivity</li> <li>• Research/Scholarship</li> </ul>	Completed – Refer to Table I for a cross reference of AEEI metrics to the Academic Program Review Process and the Creighton University – Quality Indicators project in partnership with Gallup.
2. Create a common template and procedures for annual data collection.	Collaboration with data warehouse architect and business intelligence staff	The connection of databases for importation and automaticity into the warehouse continue with the assistance from the warehouse architect and the business intelligence staff.
3. Enhance culture of annual assessment and program evaluation.	Communication and training of stakeholders	The creation of the AEEI continues to enhance the culture of assessment at Creighton University. Sessions describing the metrics have been completed and will be repeated in the future.

Table 1. Mapping of Metrics to CU-QI, AEEI, & APR

CU-QI = Creighton University – Quality Indicators (survey via partnership with Gallup)\*

AEEI = Annual Educational Effectiveness Indicators

APR = Academic Program Review

Metric	CU-QI	AEEI	APR
<b>Administrative &amp; Financial</b>			
• Admissions Yield		X	X
• Enrollment		X	X
• Instructional Expense		X	X
• Class Size		X	X
• Credit Hour Production		X	
• Online Offerings			X
• Contribution to Core, Major and Minors			X
• Actual Revenue		X	X
• Expense		X	X
• Facilities		X	
• Financial Credit Hours		X	X
• Gross Margin		X	X
<b>Academic Quality &amp; Student Outcomes</b>			
• Student Composite		X	X
• Retention	X	X	X
• Placement Rate Upon Graduation	X	X	X
• Time to degree	X	X	X
• Pass Rates on Discipline Specific Exams/Culminating Project	X	X	X
• Retention	X	X	X
• Placement Rate Upon Graduation	X	X	X
• Time to degree	X	X	X
• Entering Admission Test Scores		X	X
• Debt Load	X	X	X
• Degrees Awarded		X	X
• Peer Review of Assessment Rubric from Univ. Assess. Committee	X	X	X
• Cumulative GPA		X	
• Faculty Demographics		X	X
• Scholarly Productivity		X	X
<b>High Impact Practices (some metrics from Gallup partnership)</b>			
• Mission	X		X
• Undergraduate Research	X		
• Undergraduate Practica	X		

• Undergraduate Service Learning	X		
• Undergraduate Community Based Service Learning	X		
• Undergraduate Cultural Immersions	X		
• Professional & Graduate Student Interprofessional Experience	X		
• Student Engagement: intramural participation; mission/ministry involvement; student organization involvement; student employment and on-campus internships	X		
• Digital Learning Environment: digital resources and academic success; mobile access to academic resources; digital technology and communication; instructor effectiveness with technology	X		
• Well-Being: purpose, social, financial, community, physical	X		
• Engagement: likely to recommend; professors who cared; prepared well; mentor; received help to success	X		

\*A partnership with Gallup was established to administer a survey to Creighton students and alumni to better understand their experience as a student and alumnus. The survey created was based on the foundational work of Gallup and Purdue University (i.e., the Gallup Purdue Index). Select metrics from the Creighton Gallup Student Survey are collected, reported and analyzed for the AEEI.

### Academic Program Reviews

Since 2013, a common university-wide process for academic program reviews has resulted in the creation of common self-study templates, consistent processes, and actionable items. At the end of the 2015-2016 AY, 22 degree programs from 19 departments and four schools or colleges have undergone academic program review, using our new model. A summary report on the three-year process, actions, and evaluations and improvements was presented to the Faculty and Academic Councils, February 2016. A copy of the report may be found at [insert link, if available on the web].

Academic Program Review has enabled the University to focus attention on academic programs and to ensure that its strengths and resources are used in alignment with the mission. During the program review process, faculty members have an opportunity to reflect on their work as teachers and scholars and to engage in deliberations about strategic planning, improvement, accountability measures, and resources. Thus, program review offers academic program personnel an opportunity to review and evaluate its program(s), reflect on and refine its vision, and exchange ideas and best practices with others in order to improve Creighton University's academic programs.

Objective	Description	Results
1. Develop a university-wide common academic program database set identifying the metrics	Student metrics (e.g., admitting QPA's, ACT); faculty metrics (tenure, non-tenure, scholarship, grants); graduate metrics (e.g., employment rates, graduate school pursuit, board pass rates, certifications); program metrics (e.g., credit hour production,	Creighton University adopted an Academic Program Review Policy in November 2012 with the goals of ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of educational quality and consistency with national trends</li> <li>Documentation of student performance and achievement of stated program outcomes within the context of the University mission</li> </ul>

and minimum data set required by each program	degrees conferred per program); financial metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of resources including student support, faculty, space</li> <li>• Improvement of educational quality and strategies for improvement</li> <li>• An evaluative process which identifies strengths and weaknesses with a forward looking projection</li> <li>• Program review results should result in action</li> </ul>
2. Establish a timetable for review of the present academic programs for each college/school	Collaborate with school/college to determine timeline	All academic programs are scheduled for review through 2020; updated now through 2021. For a complete schedule, see Campus Master Schedule. <a href="http://www.creighton.edu/aea/academicprogramreviewprocessesandcalendars/">http://www.creighton.edu/aea/academicprogramreviewprocessesandcalendars/</a>
3. Develop self-study guidelines and templates	Planning and preparation phase Self-study Reporting Phase Program Review Phase Summary Phase Recommendation and Action Phase	As outlined in the policy, Academic Program Review (APR) consists of five phases: (1) Planning and Preparation, (2) Self-Study, (3) Program Review, (4) Summary, (5) Recommendation and Action as described in the Process Flow Diagram. Copies of the Process Flow Diagram and all templates may be found at: <a href="http://www.creighton.edu/aea/academicprogramreviewprocessesandcalendars/">http://www.creighton.edu/aea/academicprogramreviewprocessesandcalendars/</a> The Office of Academic Excellence and Assessment serves as the coordinating unit for this program review function.

### New Academic Program Approval Process

A new academic planning process encompasses planning and approval for new academic programs (degrees, majors and certificates). The Academic Planning Work Group Membership included: faculty, administrators, and staff (select members participate in academic planning retreats). The purpose for the approval process was: to provide support during new academic program planning; to ensure current projects continue to advance; and to bring forward ideas to the academic planning retreats.

New academic program proposal and review process is available on the University website: (<https://www.creighton.edu/center-for-academic-innovation/new-program-proposals>). The Center for Academic Innovation serves as the coordinating unit. New program proposal support team consists of personnel from market/workforce demand, finance, enrollment management, marketing, facilities, assessment & evaluation. All proposals must explicitly address:

- alignment with institutional mission
- workforce demand analysis
- Institutional capacity (resources)

- Pro-forma budget template (4-5 years)
- total cost of delivering the program
- Assessment plan
- program evaluation plan

A 4-tier review process was established for all new program proposals, including:

- 1<sup>st</sup> tier – School/College review (emphasis on curriculum, faculty, student learning assessment)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> tier – Graduate School review (for graduate programs), Adult Learning council (for adult programs)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> tier – Academic Program Planning Committee review (emphasis on administrative aspects)
- 4<sup>th</sup> tier – Deans Council and Provost review

The Provost’s office utilizes an institutional notification process for approved programs to ensure all units are notified of the approval of a new program and provided basic information about the program.

Objective	Components	Results
1. Implementation of the New Program Approval Policy requires formation of a University wide Academic Planning Review committee chaired by the Provost or designee	Pre-Proposal Formal Proposal Development/Internal Unit Approval University Review and Approval	Structure and process for academic planning has been implemented, including a policy that addresses new program planning and approval as well as an institutional academic planning process.
2. Pilot new academic program approval process	Pilot and revise	Pilot was completed for one year of reviews. Stakeholder input resulted in revision of the process for increased efficiency and targeted reporting.

**3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.**

Individually and collectively, the dimensions of Creighton University’s Quality Initiative Project have: produced changes in institutional policies and processes; enhanced and extended technological systems of reporting; and generated innovations in academic programs, curricula, and (we expect) student learning successes. Specifically,

**Annual Educational Effectiveness Indicators (AEEI) Reporting**

Creighton’s adoption and use of its Financial Review Model (FRM) improved data-driven planning; however, it captured primarily financial data and did not include elements of Academic Quality and Student Outcomes. The Annual Academic Effectiveness Reporting process was developed to deliver a broad range of program accountability metrics (See Table 1, p. 3, for a complete list of metrics. These academic effectiveness metrics will be gathered annually across all programs.

Concurrently, the university developed the Creighton University Quality Indicators (CU-QI) instrument to better measure the student experience. The CU-QI dovetails with the AEEI metrics on Academic Quality and Student Outcomes but adds measures on: students’ participation in “high impact practices” (e.g., undergraduate/graduate research, service learning, cultural immersions, interprofessional experiences), student engagement and well-

being and their experiences with the university's digital learning environment. A partnership with Gallup enabled these surveys of current students and university alumni.

We are currently in the second round of survey collection, so the results are preliminary but indicate the following:

- Overall, students are excited and proud to be students at Creighton University. Data from this survey and other sources will help steer leaders to better know how and where to nuance existing programs and initiatives in order to further strengthen the academic excellence and distinct values and mission of Creighton University.
- 60% of students have strong relationships with professors who make them excited to learn. Students are convinced of the institution's academic excellence, and 22% express pride in being a student at Creighton University.
- Nearly 50% of students responding are thriving in purpose, community and social well-being, while about 25% are thriving in physical and financial well-being. Thus, there is an opportunity to help students mitigate the financial toll that financing an education can take on personal well-being.
- Most students plan to graduate in 4 years, and the majority of students know what courses they need to graduate. Respondents indicated they know someone they can rely upon for advice about their path to graduation. Focusing on the opportunity to collaborate with others in solving problems that integrates classroom learning may be an area of focus for the future.
- Students feel connected to the mission and purpose of Creighton University. They are inclined to feel it is their responsibility to use what they are learning to serve others. Students generally say that there is someone who cares about them and their learning.

### **Academic Program Review**

Academic program review is not a new activity for Creighton University; however, the uniformity of a singular, university-wide process has required some adaptations and ongoing orientation to and communications about this academic planning process. Some specific changes included:

- Creation and introduction of the signed Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest forms prior to release of self-study documents.
- Condensed academic year timeline for reviews; to ensure the cycle of reviews are completed during the academic year, it was recommended all reviews be conducted prior to spring break (March).
- Updated policy, which reflected the practices employed during the pilot 2013-2014 AY (November 15, 2012 policy was amended on January 29, 2015)
- Use of multiple technologies to support the virtual review: the documents were originally stored on a collaboration site, but both the review team and members of the University Assessment Committee's Academic Program Review Committee (APR) found that inaccessible. Therefore, review team communities were created within our LMS (Canvas) and review documents were stored there during the review. Post-review, the complete set of review documents are archived in the collaboration site, for use in subsequent reviews and/or institutional reporting.
- Results of the 22 degree programs from 19 departments, across four schools and colleges included: strengthening eight programs, maintaining three programs, monitoring one program, suspending one program, and discontinuing three programs (other program reviews are still in process).



Therefore, while changes in processes, policy, technology, and curricular programming have occurred, it is a little early to fully measure the impact of these changes on student learning and overall academic success.

### **New Academic Program Approval Process**

As a result of the initiative the University now has an operational academic planning process that involves all academic units, incorporates relevant and current environmental data, and which involves faculty, administrators and staff. The coordination of new program planning provides a streamlined mechanism for proposal development and assures mission, institutional capacity, work force demand and program sustainability, comprehensive pro-forma budget planning, and assessment and evaluation are addressed.

19 new academic programs/majors have been started; equally important 3 proposed programs were intentionally 'not' developed. Additionally, the University identified, and is moving toward implementation of, three key academic initiatives: suite of health care administrative programs, suite of data science programs, and increasing coordination and synergies among interprofessional health science programs.

#### **4. Explain any tools, data, or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.**

Creighton University's Quality Initiative project was predicated on the need to generate better data and more meaningfully utilize this data to inform academic planning processes. A number of data collection and reporting tools were developed in the accomplishment of our QI. Specific illustrations include:

- A partnership with Gallup was established to administer a survey to Creighton students and alumni to better understand their experiences as students and alumni. The survey created was based on the foundational work of Gallup and Purdue University (i.e., the Gallup Purdue Index). Select metrics from the Creighton Gallup Student Survey are collected, reported and analyzed for the Creighton University – Quality Indicators, which is a subset of data collected as part of the AEEI and APR
- Academic program review processes have generated a unified set of metrics that include data points on: enrollment trends; instructional productivity; faculty; and student outcomes. It has also resulted in common report templates, as well as the construction of a collaboration site and LMS review team communities. Copies of all the templates may be found at: <http://www.creighton.edu/aea/academicprogramreviewprocessesandcalendars/>
- This project resulted in the development and implementation of an academic program proposal template and defined, multi-stage review process (<https://www.creighton.edu/center-for-academic-innovation/new-program-proposals>).

#### **5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.**

Creighton University's Quality Initiative project has experienced both challenges and opportunities; in fact, most of our challenges have resulted in opportunities for process and academic planning improvements. Examples of challenges/opportunities include:

- AEEI data(warehousing). Locating, scrubbing and importing AEEI data into a data warehouse were and remain labor-and time-intensive. A more robust vetting process was needed to ensure that databases in various locations or using different platforms could link to one another for automatic import into the data

warehouse. The vetting process is currently being created. Unlike the other two dimensions of this Quality Initiative, the AEEI project had no historical precedent upon which to build. Therefore, we are still in our infancy of its use and have not yet (fully) realized the value of this initiative in academic planning.

- Use of virtual reviews. Moving away from an on-campus visit by the entire team resulted in a flexibility that was attractive to many external reviewers (i.e., faculty were more willing to accept the review invitation). While it required some additional training and work with WebEx, our conferencing software, it resulted in robust conversations with both external reviewers and off-campus students and alumni. Finally, the use of virtual reviews saved the university approximately \$20,000 in its first year.
- Consistent, university-wide processes and reporting templates (and/or improved sequencing of process steps). The New Academic Program Approval Process addressed this gap by developing a pro-forma budget template that effectively (1) addresses total cost of implementing a new program, (2) accounts for anticipated revenue generation, and (3) articulates the distribution of the revenue. Additionally, using consistent metrics for the AEEI will facilitate the population of data (tables) required for the Academic Program Review Process (self-study). Finally, our processes revealed that in order to provide sufficient lead time to secure the number of qualified applicants to meet the projected enrollments, marketing and recruiting for the program may need to start before all approvals are completed. These opportunities to develop a unified, university-wide academic planning process was enabled and encouraged, with the implementation of a provost model at the university, the university's investment in new resources (e.g., Market Analyst), and the adoption of quarterly academic planning retreats by the Deans' Council.
- Faculty engagement in the processes. Creighton's faculty is fully engaged in each of our three Quality Initiative (QI) Projects. Specifically, the creation and development of metrics for the AEEI is time intensive and requires input from many stakeholders, including faculty, staff, administrators, and technology personnel. Further, faculty are fully engaged throughout the Academic Program Review (APR) process, from planning and preparation (e.g., recommendations of reviewers), self-study writing teams, interviewees during campus reviews, members of the University Assessment Committee APR, to drafters of the response memo and action items. In sum, all five phases of the process. Finally, faculty are integrally involved in developing the proposals for new academic programs as well as the subsequent design and delivery of these academic programs. The QI project has further enhanced and made more visible the critical role that faculty play in academic planning, but an ongoing challenge is managing this work when the majority of faculty have 9-month contracts (i.e., it is difficult to ensure all APRs are completed during the 9 month academic calendar; delays in program proposals over summer months).
- Campus-wide conversations on academic planning. These new processes required campus conversations, Deans' Council retreats, program director/deans' office orientations, and dialogue and reporting to Faculty/Academic Council. While there were misconceptions about the intent (e.g., academic program review is euphemistic for "killing the program") of these new initiatives, the questions raised by Faculty/Academic Council and other individuals on campus provided opportunities for educational programming (e.g., Assessment Day Symposia special sessions, campus presentations) and university-wide reporting of these activities (e.g., Faculty/Academic Council report on APRs, 2013-2016).

## Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

Given the number and range of the QI projects, it is not surprising to report a diverse and significant number of campus stakeholders were involved in this project and that they were engaged through a variety of strategies, appropriate by topic and audience. The table below identifies the stakeholder groups and the various aspects of the QI project with which they engaged.

Stakeholders	AEEI	Academic Program Review	Academic Planning
Faculty and Academic Councils		X	
Deans Council/Deans	X	X	X
University Assessment Committee		X	
Program Chairs		X	X
Departmental Faculty (FT & Adjunct)	X	X	X
Campus-based Program Reviewers		X	
External-based Program Reviewers		X	
Current Students	X	X	
Program Alumni	X	X	
Provost	X	X	X
University President	X	X	X
Career Center	X		
Institutional Research	X		
Student Life	X		
Magis Common Core	X		X
Center for Academic Innovation	X		X
Creighton EDGE	X		
Registrar	X		X
Mission and Ministry	X		X
Academic Excellence and Assessment	X	X	X
Libraries			X
University Finance	X	X	X

Facilities			X
Enrollment Management	X		X
Marketing and Communication			X
Data Warehouse	X	X	
University Relations/Alumni	X		
Pipeline Task Force			X
External Consultants	X		X

Stakeholder participation was solicited through: strategy and planning meetings, faculty development sessions, symposia presentations, university and unit-specific town halls and invited presentations, surveys, and reviews and feedback of drafts. To ensure the campus, as a whole, was kept informed of these initiatives, a number of campus presentations and university publications (e.g., Creighton magazine, newsletters, Provost updates) were regularly provided.

The QI project enjoyed wide-spread involvement across the campus, but our design and implementation were not without some “bumps in the road.” Given that many of these actions (e.g., AEEI metric agreement, university-wide metrics and process for academic program reviews) constituted a culture shift and/or are counter to (some) historical faculty practices, it is not surprising that questions (and/or anxieties) were raised. Feedback commented on the “newness” of these practices (to some); in general, faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences or other undergraduate colleges found these approaches to be “new” or “unfamiliar.” Faculty within the professional schools are very familiar with specialized accreditation practices and found the introduction of Academic Program Reviews to be consistent with current practices/national standards.

Despite these “bumps” in the road and questions raised, stakeholder participation resulted in a number of improvements in academic practices and planning. Examples of improvements, based on feedback from stakeholder participants, include:

- Delineation of university metrics to include both “all-university” metrics and “school/college/program-specific” metrics.
- APR reviewers’ contracts now include Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality statements.
- APR processes have been improved by the addition of a spring orientation planning session for directors whose programs are undergoing review in the subsequent academic year and will continue to improve with the addition of dates on all program documents and a fall orientation session for program review teams.
- New academic program proposal checklist (i.e., all-encompassing listing of required items and process steps).
- Work-force demand and environmental scans evolved from a “nice” inclusion by the program (as available) to a “necessity” in academic program proposals.

In conclusion, development of these academic planning initiatives as part of Creighton University’s QI project has enhanced the value of our academic enterprise by: creating toolboxes and processes to aid faculty in their

development and review of academic programs; generating a “one-stop” shop for new program ideas; contributing to a more comprehensive budgeting process; enhancing the transparency of academic planning processes and decision-making—although this is still a “work in progress—” and resulting in a more intentional and articulate Creighton University academic profile/strengths. “We knew that we had consistently high rankings and recognitions from entities such as *U.S. News & World Report* and others, as well as a 97 percent placement rate for new graduates,” said Provost Ed O’Connor, Ph.D., “but we knew Creighton had more than that to offer. That ‘more’ was what we sought to quantify” (*Creighton Magazine*, Fall 2015).

**7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.**

Creighton University and its faculty, staff, and administrators have learned much during the completion of this QI project. Our lessons are likely as numerous as our participants, but the following six “lessons learned” nicely illustrate our educational journey:

1. **Individual and/or institutional “practices” (i.e., how I’ve/we’ve done things) is not as useful or clear as institutional policies and processes.** For example, the use of common program review metrics ensured an intentional review of program resources and quality indicators rather than “additional resource requests, disguised by flowing narratives and colleagues’ appeals.” Additionally, clarity of academic planning process steps and staff assistance on “market research” improved faculty understanding of and quality of proposals, while allowing faculty to focus on the disciplinary, curricular and academic aspects of the planning.
2. **Using evidence across the university for decision-making required a phased approach.** The university was already in the process of moving to a Financial Review Model for budgeting; however useful this has been, there was a concurrent need for academic quality metrics to complement the financial forecasts and for those to evolve beyond anecdotal evidence. Therefore, this project has evolved across phases to allow the institution to collect and utilize both financial and academic quality metrics/quantitative and quality data in our academic planning. For example, engaging a workforce demand researcher resulted in improved data in new program proposals.
3. **Centralization, standardization, and adherence of processes needed to make evidence-based decision-making is time intensive. Corollary: Plan for delays and revisions.** Like most research-based projects, they require more time and effort than initially planned. Additionally, we discovered new issues in timing and communication: when an organization typically operates independently, coordination and timing between units may be missing (e.g., coordinate the timing of new program approvals with initiation of marketing and recruiting; sequence and coordinate communication with current students, faculty, Enrollment Management, and/or prospective students should an academic program be suspended or discontinued).
4. **Communicate, communicate, communicate—you cannot over-communicate—clearly for a variety of campus audiences.** Despite multiple campus communications, in both oral and print formats, the creation of webpages and archived documents, questions regarding policies and processes still existed. For example, the Faculty Council was unaware of the Academic Program Review website, university calendar for reviews, or processes and therefore requested a report of the activities (presented at the February 2016 meeting).
5. **Intra-institutional (e.g., schools/colleges) and inter-organizational collaborations (e.g., Gallup) improved both institutional understanding and affective learning.** Quarterly planning retreats among

the deans, Provost, Enrollment Management, and Finance fostered creative and innovative ideas for advancing the University's academic profile. Ultimately, effective institution-wide academic planning is dependent upon a core group of administrators willing to focus on recommendations that are best for the institution and not just a specific school or college or special project. Additionally, Creighton's partnership with Gallup continues to provide data on metrics related to students' experience related to concepts of engagement, well being, hope, and high impact teaching/learning.

- 6. Culture can evolve, even among loosely coupled systems, such as Creighton University, allowing new initiatives and increasing mutual accountability, while emphasizing an institution-wide vision.** Our collective practices around academic program reviews, new academic program development, and annual educational effectiveness indicators illustrates that cultures can indeed evolve. This is truly an evolutionary process; a learning process.

## Resource Provision

- 8. Explain the human, financial, physical, and technological resources that supported the initiative.**

In alignment with the University's strategic planning process under the direction of former President Fr. Lannon, a 4-year contracted partnership with Gallup was forged. The partnership is currently in its second year, resulting in qualitative and quantitative data from students and alumni addressing items related to mission, well being, engagement, hope, attachment and advocacy. The Task Force collaborating with Gallup included over 22 faculty and staff who represented all schools, colleges and divisions.

Human resources to address the technical issues related to metrics and integrative databases were hired in the Division of Information Technology (DoIT), including a Senior Director of Data Technologies, a Senior Business Analyst, and a Data Warehouse Systems Analyst. These individuals have assisted with all aspects of the QI initiatives.

As a result of the University's strategic planning process, a core group of faculty and administrators were charged with identifying opportunities for enrollment growth. This group of 11 created the new program proposal template and approval process as well as developed the recommendation for the academic planning process.

## Plans for the Future (Feature Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

- 9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.**

Recognizing that Creighton's admission into the Pathway Process was in year 7, our QI project reflects our first effort at designing activities to assure continuous improvement in our higher education practices. Therefore, while we have not yet considered our "next" QI project, we are expecting that elements of this plan may be carried over.

Given the feedback received, modifications already introduced, and values generated by these activities, Creighton University remains committed to improved, data-driven academic decision-making processes, inclusive of campus stakeholders. Therefore, we will continue to:

- Collect, report, and refine our metrics inherent in the Academic Educational Effectiveness Indicators.
- Engage in Academic Program Reviews, with the goal of improving both processes and outcomes in each annual cycle.
- Mature the academic planning process including enhancing the communication of information about the process, results of planning retreat, and regular updates on the progress.

in order to fully implement a university-wide performance-based academic quality review, planning, and improvement process (i.e., achieve the central purpose of the QI, as described in the initial proposal).

**10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.**

As noted by the proposal review team, this was an ambitious project. However, Creighton’s senior leadership team recognized the interdependence of these projects and their individual and collective importance to our institutional ability to identify and utilize common metrics, articulate and implement clear policies, and advance academic planning. In short, Creighton University was committed to developing an “organizational capacity for change.” While this remains an active and ongoing campus activity, what we have developed and learned may be of interest to other institutions, particularly those also exploring “building organizational capacity” and evidence-driven academic planning.

To date, aspects of our QI project have already been presented at or accepted for presentation at two HLC annual meetings (e.g., APR in 2015, Gallup-Creighton student development metrics in 2016) and two Graduate Program association meetings (e.g., AJCU Graduate Administrators in 2014, Midwest Association of Graduate Schools in 2015). Feedback from the 2015 HLC attendees included a number of requests for sharing our model, APR flow chart, and sample documents, whereas our colleagues in higher education were most interested in our new program proposal development and approval process and template, to include the pro-forma budget template. Additionally, the four-year partnership with Gallup will enable Creighton to longitudinally investigate the development of students upon admission through graduation. The intent is to capitalize and learn from best practices that optimally develop students who are engaged and are well rounded in the five domains of well being. Additionally, the items in the survey that are focused on experiences with the Jesuit, Catholic mission have potential to be used with branding a survey for other Jesuit colleges and universities and perhaps other faith-based institutions.

As previously articulated and recently demonstrated, Creighton University remains committed to sharing with and learning from our colleagues at other institutions.