Rising to the Moment

These past few months have been nothing short of amazing as we all had the tremendous opportunity to watch our men’s basketball team’s historic NCAA tournament run to the Elite Eight for the first time in the modern tournament era.

In the time I have had to reflect on what that run has meant to our student-athletes, our University, and our alumni and fans, I am reminded that no one person succeeds solely on their own. It takes a community, working together toward a common goal, that allows us to find the passion and strength we need to rise to the moment.

That sense of community, made up of more than 2,000 employees, nearly 8,000 students, and over 80,000 alumni worldwide, continues the vision of Creighton University’s founders, Edward, Mary Lucretia, John, and Sarah Emily Creighton. We see the power of their vision in the students who come from across the nation and around the world to experience what a Jesuit education has to offer, going on to become alumni and carrying those lessons with them as they support their own communities at home and abroad.

These are the 80% of our students who arrive in Omaha from outside Nebraska, nearly half of whom choose to stay in the state after graduation and make a tangible impact. This is also the approximately 500 future Creighton professionals we are educating in Arizona, across five distinct disciplines, with plans for expansion underway to help address the state’s healthcare provider shortage. And we’ve seen it for 50 years in the Dominican Republic, where Creighton faculty, staff, and students have provided healthcare and infrastructure resources to communities in need.

However, this impact is felt well beyond the clinical setting. Our cover story discusses Creighton’s role in building healthy communities, which resonates in our students’ academic success, their spiritual discernment, our investment in a sustainable planet, and in the community of poor institutions that together make up the BIG EAST, our conference home for the past decade.

I want to congratulate our student-athletes and coaches for their successes in competition and beyond this past year and for the ways they have represented our University. I also want to recognize the students who contributed to the second annual BIG EAST Undergraduate Research Poster Symposium, where Creighton once again finished in the top three. These are communities of innovation today that are setting the stage for the discoveries of tomorrow.

We also celebrate our alumni community whose continued investment, engagement, and support of Creighton University allows us to recruit, retain, and inspire future generations of students who will go on to do amazing things as Creighton professionals.

The year 2023 has already provided an incredible opportunity to reflect on Creighton’s past and offered a preview of our future. This fall, we will realize the completion of the CL and Rachel Werner Center for Health Sciences Education, Graves Hall, and our Jérôme Nadal, SJ, Jesuit Residence. Plans are also underway for future investments in our campuses made possible because of our Creighton communities.

So, as we continue to light the way forward toward our 150-year sesquicentennial in 2028, I want to express my gratitude to be able to share the Creighton University story and, in doing so, celebrate the story of everyone who calls Creighton home.

May you and your families have a blessed remainder of spring and a fruitful summer of joy and happiness.

Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD
President
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Cover Illustration by Anna Godeassi

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A Pilgrimage of Solidarity

Creighton Honors Program students traveled to Rwanda to study the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, learning life lessons and the importance of community.

As the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 draws ever nearer, 11 students given in Creighton University’s Honors Program spent 10 days last October visiting the central African nation.

There they visited the Kigali National Genocide Memorial, attended the Church of Rwanda where approximately 5,000 Tutsis were murdered while seeking refuge, and learned about the emerging Rwanda where reconciliation and healing have joined with advancements in medicine and education to produce a new generation committed to peaceful coexistence.

The trip, which was described as a “pilgrimage,” took place during fall break from Oct. 7-16 and was part of the honors class Christanity and the Rwandan Genocide, taught by Jay Carney, PhD, assistant professor of theology and director of the Christian Spirituality Program, and Tricia Ross, PhD, resident assistant professor, Honors Program.

Sitting in a classroom learning about one of the 20th century’s great crimes against humanity is one thing. But visiting the country where it occurred and speaking to people who lived through it reflects Creighton’s commitment to global education and the Jesuit commitment to relocating to the margins.

Creighton Honors Program students Adele Varley and Camille Vigil both made the trip.

“I was excited to be able to travel to Rwanda,” Varley says. “I think it really experience to be invited to participate. I would never have been able to do that anywhere else.”

That, the Rwandan Genocide, which lasted approximately 100 days between April 7 and July 15 of 1994, saw more than 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis murdered by government-directed Hutu militias in the aftermath of the Rwandan Civil War that commenced in 1990. The reverberations of the genocide later spread across the border to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where insecurity and violence continue to reign today.

To visit those tragic sites, Carney says, was to embody the Jesuit commitment to experiencing global humanity in person and up close.

“Since their origins in the 16th century, the Jesuits have been a great order,” Carney says. “Likewise, global educational opportunities play a vital role in Jesuit higher education since they provide unique ways in which to engage both minds and hearts.”

Carney says the students were urged to consider the trip a “pilgrimage of solidarity” that focused on the four “Rs” of remembrance, reconciliation, rebuilding and reflection.

Ross says the trip brought course material to life, developed a sense of connection to Rwandans and inspired reflection about how to build on this experience in future personal, professional and community engagements.

“We believe this course’s vision of global engagement exemplified Pope Francis’ recent teaching in Fratielli tutti: ‘To speak of a culture of encounter, means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone.”

Vigil says the trip proved impactful and reminded her of the importance of community, both in her own life and globally.

“This was a very unique Creighton experience,” she says. “We stayed with a group of Jesuits, and the ability of our classmates to really engage and be present was something that I think is in particular only to the Creighton Honors Program.”

Given the somber nature of the events they were studying, the students were well prepared.

“The instruction we received was very thorough,” Vigil says. “We were prepped with spiritual advisors as well as historical information to really help us get the most out of it. I felt prepared for what we saw there and for what we experienced just. We did not feel like we could afford to. It just cost too much to be healthy. That changed when she learned about the Cura Project, a Creighton-run program and study of Omahans with Type 2 diabetes. The Cura Project addresses food insecurity and economic instability to improve diabetes-related outcomes, seeking the path that the path to better health runs right through the pocketbook.

Across four “interventions” in the 18-month program, Clark’s finances, diet and life improved markedly. A financial social worker helped her find housing and connected her with resources.
for her son, who has special needs. A biweekly “food pharmacy” provided free diabetic-friendly food to help her maintain her blood sugars (not to mention free up some of her income). A health coach showed her ways to prepare that food. And the Cura Project’s financial success program helped Clark open a savings account.

Stories like Clark’s are common among the 100 Omahans who have participated in the Cura Project in the program, they have found a tangible source of good food and nutrition. But just as important, they have found a bridge linking them to other invaluable community resources they weren’t even aware of, services that make life more manageable.

The cause and effect of so many of our lives—medical or monetary—is stress, says Julie Kalkowski, leader of the financial success component.

“At first I was out of my mind about my money, you can’t think about eating healthy or planning ahead,” she says. “We have repeatedly seen that reducing financial stress also decreases other life stressors. When people feel like they have more control over their lives, life just gets better.”

Kalkowski is the executive director of the Financial Hope Collaborative (a Creighton financial education program that has graduated more than 1,000 participants since 2009). This is where the seed of the idea of the Cura Project first took root. The program started in 2021 with a $2.3 million investment from the Diabetes Care Foundation. The Cura Project has since obtained $500,000 in funding from UnitedHealthcare of Nebraska and, in December, $1 million from a Nebraska Department of Economic Development Financial Literacy Grant.

The Cura Project is the only financial-medical partnership in Nebraska and one of just a dozen or so in the country. Part of what makes it so unique is its need for the kind of innovative and interdisciplinary approach Creighton thrives on.

The Cura Project is an interdisciplinary effort, made possible by students, faculty and staff in the Homer B. Johnson College of Business, the School of Medicine and the School of Pharmacy and Health Professional, as well as the clinical team at CHI Health Creighton University Medical Center – University Campus, where the research is taking place.

The study’s lead investigators—pharmacy associate professors Nicole Gillespie White, PharmD, and Kevin Fuji, PharmD—say the early data is promising.

“Diabetes, as much as any condition, is really significantly impacted by social determinants,” White says. “This is a disease affected deeply by poverty, food insecurity and stress, making it the ideal condition to study this wide range of social and medical interventions.”

For all the good the Cura Project is already doing in the individual lives of its participants, the end game is to obtain results that can potentially be scaled up to an even larger and more transformative form of financial health-care for all.

Residency Programs Aim to Combat Rural Physician Shortages

Rural hospitals across the country are facing challenges, including physician shortages. The School of Medicine in Omaha and its primary academic medical partner in the region, CHI Health, have created first-of-their-kind residency programs to give new medical graduates experience in both urban and rural areas.

Creighton’s Office of Graduate Medical Education and CHI Health have created hybrid rural tracks for internal medicine residents and psychiatry residents. Those accepted spend half of their residency training at CHI Health Creighton University Medical Center – Medical Campus, the clinical partner in the region, CHI Health. The hybrid programs are not only the first of their kind in Nebraska, they also are the first in the country to gain the designation as an accredited rural track program by Creighton.

In February, the program launched a grant to fund a pilot program that would provide more of the same.

Kilimanjaro Beckons Professor, Burn Survivors

When Kevin Foster, MD, a professor in the School of Medicine in Phoenix, was approached with an opportunity to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, he jumped at the chance. Taking on this difficult mission was tough for the recreational hiker, but the thrill of the challenge wasn’t the main incentive.

Foster was more excited to join the other participants — burn survivors who had been admitted to the Arizona Burn Center at Valleywise Health, where Foster is the director. The expedition was initiated as a way to show what survivors can accomplish. Foster, it was personal.

“I’m close with all of the survivors who climbed. I helped care for them,” Foster says, “It’s a piece of cake compared to what the burn survivors all went through.”

With chilly nights and full days of hiking, the climb took its toll: Some members of the group turned back before the final climb, but in the end, all eight of the burn survivors, along with Foster, made it to the top.

“It was just such a great relief to get there,” Foster says. “A lot of the survivors were still at the top when I got there, and I got to celebrate with them. And while the expedition was tough, Foster says, “It’s a piece of cake compared to what the burn survivors all went through.”

Survivors who made the climb included Christian and Stephanie Nielsen, who were injured in a plane crash. Jason Nelsen, who was burned over 80% of his body in a natural gas explosion, and Cristin Lipinski, who had a rare bacterial infection. The eight survivors represented months of hospitalization, operations and immeasurable pain, but also triumph.

“It demonstrates the triumph of the human spirit. I know these people really well. I know what they’ve been through, and I know that they would all work very hard to be successful at this, and they did. It was really rewarding, and a wonderful thing to watch and to be a part of.”

A documentary of the journey will premiere this year. The expedition raised more than $350,000 for the new burn unit, set to open in late 2022.
It has been an exciting year for Creighton student Liz Zaruba who is among 100 recipients of the inaugural Obama-Chesky Voyager Scholarships for Public Service.

She was already having an over-the-top academic experience in the fall at the University of Sydney in Australia through a Creighton-sponsored study abroad program. Then, in November, she and the other Voyagers were invited to the two-day Obama Foundation Democracy Forum in New York City.

The forum gathered together additional program participants in the Obama Foundation Network, leaders of nations and others, to facilitate discussions on strengthening democracy. “To hold a seat at the table with individuals who hold such foresight and unbridled aspirations for change is incredibly energizing,” Zaruba says. She says the students participated in a live Q&A with former President Barack Obama and Airbnb co-founder and CEO Brian Chesky.

Planning to attend medical school, Zaruba is majoring in health administration and policy with minors in biology, public health and global health equity. Her goal is to improve health systems in poorer parts of the world.

The scholarship provides financial aid to students seeking a career in public service, meaningful travel experiences to expand their horizons, and a network of mentors and leaders to support them. Funded by a $100 million contribution from Chesky, the scholarships apply to juniors and seniors, with a maximum of $25,000 per year for tuition or other education-related expenses. Recipients also receive $10,000 to design a “summer voyage” between their junior and senior years to pursue internship or self-designed experiences anywhere in the world, while using Airbnb travel credits to stay in Airbnbs. Recipients also receive a 10-year, post-graduation Airbnb travel allowance of $2,000 per year to encourage continued international exposure.

Eighteen hundred students applied for 100 scholarships. Zaruba says it was a stunning moment when she saw her award notification in her email inbox. “I was sitting in one of my classes on a random Monday going through my inbox when I stumbled on it,” she says. “It said, Congratulations, you’ve been selected. I looked at it for about 10 minutes, thinking it was some kind of spam email. This really was my dream scholarship,” she says.

Zaruba’s summer experience will be in Geneva, Switzerland, and will involve medical resource distribution and trade-related issues within low-resource settings.

Creighton Nursing, CHI Health Grant to Impact Behavioral Health Workforce

Creighton and CHI Health have received a $1.1 million grant from the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska to help develop, recruit and retain Nebraska’s behavioral health workforce. The funding is part of the American Rescue Plan Act.

“This is an innovative project that combines the resources of the College of Nursing and CHI Health to address the critical shortage of psychiatric-mental healthcare in Nebraska,” says Catherine Todero, PhD, BSN’72, dean of the College of Nursing and vice provost for Health Sciences Campuses. “We believe expanding the scope of practice for primary care practitioners and providers by adding certification in psychiatric-mental health will bring this vital service quickly to areas where it is desperately needed.”

In this project, current family pediatrics and/or adult acute geriatric nurse practitioners employed by CHI Health in Nebraska will be provided the opportunity to become certified as psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioners in a one-year online program. The program will allow for a rapid increase in the behavioral health workforce of Nebraska.

Potential candidates will be recruited, and those eligible for the program will receive scholarships to Creighton’s one-year postgraduate psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner certificate program.

This project is designed to expedite increases in the behavioral health workforce.

Zaruba Lands Obama Foundation Scholarship

LIKE SO MANY GREAT THINGS AT CREIGHTON, the Service & Justice Trips started small. In the spring of 1983, seven students — possessing little more than good intentions and a stack of peanut butter sandwiches — packed into a van and hit the road for a spring break trip to Kentucky.

Once the students arrived, their host, the Christian Appalachian Project, split them into two groups, dispatching them to the poverty-stricken coal-mining towns of Martin and Harlan, where they would visit the elderly, build steps, repair homes, clean yards, chop firewood and whatever was needed.

It wasn’t the kind of work that changed the world. But it did end up changing their world. More than 900 miles from campus, they got to experience Creighton’s values — and their own — in a whole new light.

There was no plan beyond the trip itself. They didn’t intend to start an annual program. They weren’t trying to form a student organization. They just wanted to help.

Now, reflecting on it 40 years later, those former students are a bit overwhelmed by what that first trip turned into — a program that has shaped the lives of thousands of alumni; a tradition so thoroughly woven into Creighton’s DNA that it’s hard to envision a Creighton tradition without it.

“The first seven students included Ellen Townley, BSN’83, Paul Pavlik, BSW’84, and Liz Zaruba, who had served in a summer program in Appalachia the previous year,” says former student Tim Townley, who had served in a summer program in Appalachia the previous year. “It wasn’t the kind of work that changed the world. But it was the kind of work that changed the world.”

The purpose of that first trip was twofold. “Looking back,” Townley says, “I realize the purpose of that first trip was twofold. One was to do something worthwhile. The other was to educate people and raise their consciousness and increase awareness of how things are in a different part of the country.” — BY MICAH MERTES

Read more: A group of students, alumni and staff reflect on four decades of Service & Justice Trips — from that first ride to Kentucky through today. Visit alumni.creighton.edu/news-events/news/service-justice-trips-anniversary or scan the QR code to read more.

For more information:

Graduating Creighton School of Medicine students in Omaha and Phoenix learned of their medical residencies during Match Day ceremonies in March. Of the 165 participating Creighton students, 92% matched into their specialty of choice in 20 different specialties, with programs in 30 states.

1,466 participants have gone on 966 Service & Justice Trips.
provider workforce in rural Nebraska. Nebraska is acutely experiencing a gap of available psychiatric mental health providers to meet current needs. Eighty-eight of 93 counties in Nebraska are designated as a mental health provider shortage area, with 29 counties lacking the existence of any behavioral health professional.

**Ehner Channels Star Wars to Teach Conflict Resolution**

During his 15 years teaching conflict resolution at Creighton, Neam Ehner reached an important conclusion. Darth Vader should have sweetened his offer to Luke Skywalker.

It could have saved a lot of trouble, even as it rendered the post-Death Star story of galactic struggle between darkness and light less tenable. There are, after all, as Oh-Wee Kenobi assures an adoring boy by the name of Luke Skywalker, “alternatives to fighting.”

Ehner, a professor of negotiation and conflict resolution in the Heider College of Business, is a self-described Star Wars nerd who takes a very delight in explaining how lessons about conflict resolution may be gleaned from the epic space opera now beloved by several generations across the globe. Compare, for example, the hostility and fighting around the table characteristic of negotiating sessions with the Jedi and the graceful, collaborative process displayed by the galaxy’s most famous intergalactic suite.

“Pop culture is a very powerful engine. The question I am asking is, ‘How can we hitch the wagon of conflict resolution, and some basic conflict literacy, to that vehicle in a way that will open a channel to the general public?’” Ehner says it is easier to tell the world about it. In fact, he and 24 fellow Star Wars aficionados teaching at universities around the world have done so in a newly released book, *Star Wars and Conflict Resolution: There Are Alternatives to Fighting.* The book constitutes the first step toward embedding a conviction Ehner has long carried that popular culture can be used as a vehicle to teach not only university students, but humanity in general, that conflict resolution need not involve blowing up Death Stars.

For years, a lot of teachers, me included, have used bits and pieces of popular culture to clarify an idea or to give a demonstration in class,” he says. “Pop culture is a very powerful engine. The question I am asking is, ‘How can we hitch the wagon of conflict resolution, and some basic conflict literacy, to that vehicle in a way that will open a channel to the general public?’”

**Arizona Awards $11.9 Million to Provide Next-Generation Nursing Education**

The College of Nursing has been awarded $11.9 million from the Arizona Department of Health Services. Of that total, $5.9 million will go toward scholarships for 80 accelerated nursing students and supporting their success with the hiring of an additional clinical academic counselor, a clinical placement coordinator and a program manager. The other $6 million will go toward further enhancing Creighton’s campus in Phoenix, pushing forward the University’s intentional plan to create cutting edge academic spaces to help meet the future healthcare needs of Arizona.

“Creighton’s commitment to Arizona has been longstanding and this investment will strengthen our ability to provide the state with highly trained nurses,” says the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, S.J., Ph.D., Creighton president.

Nurses who graduate from Creighton’s accelerated 12-month program with this scholarship will be clinic-ready and committed to working in Arizona for at least four years, ultimately creating a more talented and diverse nursing workforce within the state.

“We are grateful for this support and the recognition that Creighton’s national reputation for excellence will help to attract some of the best and brightest students to Arizona,” says Catherine Tobin, Ph.D., RN, ’72, dean of the College of Nursing and vice provost of Health Sciences Campuses. “By providing exceptional nursing education and meaningful clinical experiences, Creighton is equipping graduates to serve and succeed in Arizona, delivering a significant return on investment for the state.”
The 2015 papal encyclical, *Laudato si’* (“Praise Be to You”), published two years into the papacy of Pope Francis, urges “care for our common home” by resisting environmental degradation and global warming, encouraging responsible development, reining in consumerism and embracing sustainability practices.

In 2017, Creighton President the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD, signed the global St. Francis/Laudato si’ Pledge, thus renewing Creighton’s commitment to building a culture of environmental care. That act, Baruth says, marked the beginning of a determined push to embrace sustainability practices.

“It was really at that point that the idea of sustainability became very intentional here,” Baruth says. “Before that there were some ad hoc sustainability initiatives from some staff and faculty, but there was no obvious effort coming from a central hub or from a central office dedicated to the purpose.”

Now, there is.

Baruth, former associate professor of physics at Creighton and a leader in the field of solar technology, is the second, newly appointed director of the University’s Office of Sustainability Programs, which is now a three-person office committed to guiding Creighton’s embrace of the papal encyclical.

Creighton’s student body led the way, Baruth says, by successfully pushing to eliminate some single-use plastics on campus and by urging University administrators to begin divestment in fossil-fuel companies. Students rose to the occasion during the COVID-19 pandemic by establishing a composting system that continues to provide soil for Omaha community gardens, and by promoting the use of reusable crockery and silverware.

“A boldness emerged from the encyclical that inspired students to take action and to make sure that administration, staff and faculty were taking it as seriously as they did,” Baruth says. “A lot of what we are doing now reflects that.”

Creighton’s campus today is a place where energy use is monitored everywhere, sometimes inspiring a competitive spirit among students in residential halls. Buildings old and new are constantly examined for efficiencies, new buildings are designed to reduce campus square footage while maximizing efficiencies, and innovations such as LED lighting and solar panels are retrofitted to existing buildings and incorporated in new construction.

Even relatively new buildings such as the School of Dentistry, which was completed in the fall of 2018, are subjected to regular inspections to identify areas that can be updated and improved.

“We are constantly reviewing buildings, even spaces that don’t feel particularly old,” Baruth says. “We have an outside company that comes in and basically goes top to bottom looking for potential inefficiencies. There are always new technologies coming out, so the question becomes, ‘Can we do this better?’”

Well, yes, we can, which is why the roof of the new CL and Rachel Werner Center for Health Sciences Education currently arising along Cuming Street near the North Freeway, will be covered in solar panels, and why solar technology will be incorporated into the new Graves residence hall.

“It is a great thing that as we build new buildings – and as everybody has noticed we are in a period of building – some type of solar integration and building efficiency is always a piece of the conversation,” Baruth says.

At the very heart of Creighton’s commitment is the Sustainable Creighton Initiative (SCI), a plan to focus on greenhouse gas emission reduction and waste diversion through 2028. For Baruth, the SCI constitutes a road map, a critical resource in Creighton’s path forward.

“I think that is the big success story in our effort to address *Laudato si’*,” Baruth says. “Between 60 and 70 people worked on that document. It wasn’t just a top-down directive. It was really an inclusive process where students and faculty in different schools and colleges all came together.

“I was part of that almost two-year task force. It gave us a document that said these are the priorities and this is how we think we’re going to get there. It laid out a road map so now we have well-defined goals and methodologies to get there.”

Finally, Baruth says, sustainability drives are about more than emissions. They are about hope.

“I don’t want our students to feel that we are doomed to some fate that is a foregone conclusion, but that we can take actionable steps,” he says. “The Sustainable Creighton Initiative lets students be part of that solution. I find that very encouraging.”
A Decade in the BIG EAST

When Creighton officially joined a reconfigured BIG EAST Conference at 12:01 a.m. on July 1, 2013, it marked the beginning of an exciting new era not only for Creighton Athletics but for the University itself. Then-President the Rev. Timothy Lannon, SJ, EdD, BS’73, called the University’s entrance into the BIG EAST, which was home to seven (now nine) Catholic schools, a “match made in heaven.”

Today, the conference is thriving, with 11 nationally prominent colleges and universities finding success in athletic competition, in the classroom and beyond. Creighton President the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD, who serves as president of the BIG EAST’s Board of Directors, says the conference is well positioned for a future of preeminence.

Creighton’s current and former athletic directors and six coaches who have been at Creighton since the move to the BIG EAST Conference in 2013 reflect on what the move to the conference has meant for Creighton, its athletic programs and its student-athletes.

In Their Own Words

Creighton’s current and former athletic directors and six coaches who have been at Creighton since the move to the BIG EAST Conference in 2013 reflect on what the move to the conference has meant for Creighton, its athletic programs and its student-athletes.

**“It’s getting our excellent athletic and academic programs noticed. It’s attracting quality students and quality professors to teach them. It’s a fantastic conference, and I’m excited for the ways it will continue to put the University on the map.”**

Marcus Blossom
McCormick Endowed Athletic Director

**“There’s no question that being in the BIG EAST has raised our profile. It’s been transformative and continues to catapult our institution.”**

Kirsten Bernalhal Booth
Volleyball Head Coach

**“I think I was most impressed by how the student-athletes handled the transition. It was a huge adjustment, but I never heard a complaint out of them. They just looked forward to the new opportunities being in the BIG EAST presented us.”**

Ed Servais
Baseball Head Coach

**“I remember when Rass was talking to us about the move, he said, “This isn’t just for Athletics. It’s for the whole University.”**

Tom Lilly, BA’93
Men’s and Women’s Tennis Head Coach

**“We were walking into a world that we knew was going to be pretty cool, even if we didn’t really know how to navigate it yet. But it’s ended up being a great ride.”**

Greg McDermott
Men’s Basketball Head Coach

**“There’s no question in my mind that Creighton is in a better place for having gone to the BIG EAST. Was it a risk? Yes. But I think if you look at what it’s done for our programs and the University over the last decade, it would be very hard to say it wasn’t the right decision.”**

Jim Flanery, BA’97
Women’s Basketball Head Coach

**“The No. 1 thing it’s helped me in is recruiting. My job is about a lot more than coaching my players on how to hit a golf ball. The most important thing is the relationships you’re building with these kids.”**

Debbie Curry, BA’77
Women’s Golf Head Coach

**“With all of our sports, what I’m most proud of is that on a much more national platform, we’ve been able to demonstrate through our athletics programs that to a team, they love each other, they love the sport they’re playing, they love the fans.”**

Bruce “Rass” Rasmussen
Former McCormick Endowed Athletic Director

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**Above numbers as of March 30, 2023**

**10 BIG EAST tournament titles**

**16 BIG EAST conference titles**

**9 BIG EAST Coach of the Year honors**

**27 BIG EAST Team Academic Excellence Awards**

**45 BIG EAST Player of the Year honors**

**15 CoSIDA Academic All-Americans**
Creighton is collaborating across disciplines in Omaha and Phoenix to find innovative ways to create vibrant and healthy communities by

- narrowing disparities in healthcare
- inspiring the next generation of diverse, compassionate healthcare professionals
- addressing critical determinants of health including financial literacy, juvenile justice, mental health and healthy eating

Though the striking new buildings transforming Creighton’s campus earn frequent notice, and though the University’s exciting sports programs build name recognition across the United States, another aspect of life at Creighton exerts a quiet but transformational influence on the lives of ordinary people.

An expansive understanding of what constitutes “community health” is guiding the University’s outreach into underserved communities. This effort encompasses traditional healthcare education along with teaching financial literacy; pursues juvenile justice, healthy eating, diabetes education, classes and video presentations about mental health; offers guidance for African American seniors navigating confusing healthcare systems; and connects people to health resources in the Omaha community, which includes Creighton’s own low-cost or free community clinics.

In Omaha and its surrounding areas, Creighton’s community health outreach is well established and continues to grow — stretching out through a network of partnerships, including those with schools and nonprofit organizations, connecting students and faculty with those in need of care.

In the heart of historic North Omaha, at the Highlander building, an integral part of the Seventy Five North housing complex, Creighton leases approximately 4,000 square feet of space, where, together with such community icons as the Charles Drew Health Center and Metropolitan Community College, it carries healthcare knowledge from Creighton’s campus to the doorsteps of ordinary people.

“It’s consistent with this broader idea that health is not just administering medications but also about the social and economic conditions that impact health,” says LaShaune Johnson, PhD, associate professor of public health at Creighton and director of Creighton University at Highlander.

“That’s why we were so excited last year when we started partnering with the Creighton School of Law because we know that people need help to engage with our social systems so

Creighton is collaborating across disciplines in Omaha and Phoenix to find innovative ways to create vibrant and healthy communities by narrowing disparities in healthcare inspiring the next generation of diverse, compassionate healthcare professionals addressing critical determinants of health including financial literacy, juvenile justice, mental health and healthy eating

BY EUGENE CURTIN

Illustration by Anna Godeassi
“It’s consistent with this broader idea that health is not just administering medications but also about the social and economic conditions that impact health.”

LaShaune Johnson, PhD
Associate Professor of Public Health
Director of Creighton University at Highlander

they can remake their lives. If they don’t, their health will probably be impacted.”

Creighton’s Highlander-based activities touch many challenges facing underserved communities.

“A keystone program is helping people complete their high school diploma, because education is tightly linked to healthcare outcomes,” Johnson says.

Guided by John Gallion Jr, MS ’15, director of Creighton’s Educational Opportunity Center, the program offers adult basic education courses and college enrollment assistance.

“They need us,“ Johnson adds.

Then, we had a grant from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine to educate African Americans about mental health,” Johnson says.

Co-investigated by Kathryn Omoroto, MS ’15, EdB ’22, program manager for Creighton’s Center for Interprofessional Practice, Education and Research (CIPER), and Elizabeth Riscaden, University librarian, the grant funded the “Sick and Tired” project.

“We partnered with providers of color in Omaha and other cities to do videos and presentations about mental health, both online and physically for people who couldn’t access Zoom,” Johnson says. “We know communities that experience digital disparities also experience health disparities.”

Julie Kalkowski, executive director of the Financial Hope Collaborative at the Heider College of Business, reduces financial stress for families in the Omaha area through financial success Program through the Financial Hope Collaborative, based in the Heider College of Business, Retirement, and Community Affairs (HS-MACA), Kosoko-Lasaki plays many roles, none more vigorously than leading HS-MACA’s community outreach activities from Creighton’s Hixson-Lied Science Building.

“Many people have questions about healthcare, about where to go and whom to see,” Kalkowski says. “These community health workers live right there in the neighborhoods, trusted neighbors who can answer questions about accessing healthcare services, who understand healthcare needs and can promote individual wellness from chronic diseases that are highly prevalent in minority communities.”

“This latest HS-MACA outreach builds on a long history of working with youth and young adults, which has seen the department since its 2000 creation impact the lives of more than 15,000 students through pipeline programs
“Population health is a team sport, requiring the alignment of diverse perspectives and expertise to improve equity in health and healthcare. There is a great opportunity to make population health an embodiment of Creighton’s social justice mission.”

SCOTT SHIPMAN, MD
CyncHealth Endowed Chair for Population Health

Formerly the national director of clinical innovations and the physician lead for primary care and workforce initiatives for the Association of American Medical Colleges, Shipman will work with leaders of Creighton’s health sciences programs in Omaha and Phoenix, as well as the University’s other colleges, in a joint effort to build a Population Health Institute.

“Creighton has a long history of outstanding work by individuals committed to serving the health and well-being of the community,” Shipman says. “Every school at Creighton has much to offer to positively impact population health, at the level of the health system, the community, the state and beyond.

“Population health is a team sport, requiring the alignment of diverse perspectives and expertise to improve equity in health and healthcare. There is a great opportunity to make population health an embodiment of Creighton’s social justice mission.”

A major element of this endeavor will be a partnership between Creighton and CHI Health, as well as CyncHealth’s Nebraska Healthcare Collaborative, to establish research, policy and practical expertise for evaluating the impact and return on investment of population health interventions.

“All of this, from exposing youths in underserved communities to possible careers in healthcare, helping people understand their legal rights or complete a high school education, and helping underserved communities better navigate the maze of healthcare services, reflects a historic calling,” Bautista says, “which is to support the community. It’s in our heart to do that.”
Spirituality, religion and the experience of sports is a topic of ongoing study and research for two Creighton professors.

POOR OLD GOD. There stand the multitudes, their praying hands begging divine favor upon the soccer player about to take a game-winning penalty kick. Discordant voices, however—hands also joined in supplication—beg favor on the goalkeeper.

What’s the Creator to do? Like foxholes, there are no atheists in sports, not, at least, when everything’s at stake. Indeed, it has often been observed that in some places—New York City, perhaps, or Manchester, England—sport carries the flavor of religion, complete with cathedral-like stadiums and generational piety.

This relationship between the human experience of religious faith and its kindred expression in sports has been the subject of much thought at Creighton, especially in the work of Max Engel, PhD, associate professor in education and theology, and Jay Carney, PhD, associate professor of theology.
“As the Jesuits would say, you find God in all things, not only in explicitly religious activities but everywhere.”

JAY CARNEY, PHD
Associate Professor of Theology

_*As the Jesuits would say,*_

... in all things, confides Dr. Carney. “You find God in all things...”

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**RELIGIOUS IMPULSE, PASSIONS UNLEASHED**

The two Creighton professors are clearly on to something.

And, of course, less edifying elements too, such as cheating, betrayal, the full spectrum of human experience, the good and the bad.

“In some ways,” Engel says, “you might argue that sports teach valuable lessons, but the research says that you have to be really clear about what is being taught because sports sometimes unfortunately can tap into our basest tribalistic mentalities.

“Sports can act as a proxy for economic, social and cultural differences as we see in Scotland, where the historical Protestant/Catholic divide has shaped the relationship between the religious impulse and the cultural differences.”

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**Science and Tech Help Creighton Athletes Soar**

Ultimately, athletes must sink the basket, get on base and run the miles. Although that never changes, Creighton University support staff are developing ever more scientific methods to help them succeed.

From computer chips in basketballs gathering data from devices attached to players’ shoes, to specially crafted shoes that help cross-country athletes run better and recover quicker, to teams of student analysts conducting baseball analytics so thoroughly that their services were recruited by the NCAA Men’s College World Series, Creighton is exploring new frontiers in sports science.

Creighton’s cross-country program has benefited from donor generosity that has made possible the purchase of Nike “super shoes” that feature high-performance upgrades shown to reduce injury, speed recovery and boost performance.

“These items have had a profound impact on our program and elevated our performance,” says cross-country head coach Chris Gannon. “Because of our donors, we are continuing to provide our student-athletes with the tools they need to perform at their best, and we’re building a program that gets better every year.”

Creighton basketball players, for their part, are charging the basket with charged-up basketballs. The computer chips embedded in the balls enable vast data collection that lets coaches assess the strengths and weaknesses of players as well as the effectiveness, or not, of shots from various distances and parts of the court.

As Greg McDermott, men’s basketball head coach, told Omaha television station KETV, “It’s one thing as a coach to tell a guy what I think I see. It’s a little bit better when I have the data to back it up.”

Students on the Creighton Baseball Analytics Team (CBAT) know all about data. CBAT is a prolific source of stats for Creighton’s baseball coaches, assisting scouting and baseball theory. With 15 members gathering data, crunching numbers and making numerical sense of what happens on the field, this Heider College of Business-associated group has made analytics an important part of the baseball program.

So effective have they been that the NCAA Men’s College World Series came calling in 2022, asking CBAT to handle analytics for the tournament.

“Our program started with one guy and a notebook at Creighton games,” says Rowan Jensen, student director of CBAT. “Three years later, we have a team of 15 being asked to work the College World Series.”

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serve as a distillation of human experience that includes hope, joy, suffering, relationships and disappointment. “What do these experiences mean in sports? In life? And ultimately, what do these experiences mean when viewed through a theological lens?”

A RECEPTIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

Students prove receptive to this line of inquiry. Engel says, because the reality of loss, suffering, disappointment and other foundational human emotions are much more present to them through the experience of sports than through a theology class. “For many of them, sports have been central to their identity and sense of self, which offers yet another fruitful opportunity for reflection and personal, spiritual growth,” Engel says, all critical elements of a Jesuit education.

“Interesting and novel as this line of inquiry may be, potential students should know that the course involves far more than watching and discussing ESPN highlights.”

Though the course is currently available only to student-athletes, Weber says, “I think a lot of students would be interested in this,” he says. “Even if they are not student-athletes, I think there is a high amount of interest about, well, what is NIL?” We hear about it on the news, but we don’t really know. We hear about it. This is a decision, but we don’t really understand it. “So, I think this could be a foundation for a very successful course wide available to other students.”

NIL Course Guides Students Through Dangers, Toils and Snares

Name, Image and Likeness. When the U.S. Supreme Court held the NCAA in violation of antitrust law on June 21, 2021, four Creighton professors saw emerging a new and more complicated world of student-athlete remuneration. So, they created a four-module course titled Seminar in Business: NIL Issues for Student-Athletes. The course is designed to guide student-athletes through the potential pitfalls of a new world in which large amounts of money potentially could come their way.

David Weber, JD, professor in the School of Law, teaches legal issues. Personal branding is taught by Tim Bastian, Personal branding is taught by Tim McMahon, PhD, associate professor of marketing.

“After taking the course, I now think spirituality is meant to enhance the experience people have with sports,” Relan says. “Through playing and practicing, we have the ability to experience God’s grace and recognize His presence.”

“Sometimes, it can be hard to think about this, as sports can become the main focus of our lives, but it’s important to remember that sports are not just about winning or losing.”

The course proved a useful moment of reflection, Relan says. “While we all have different beliefs, we can all take a step back and realize that God is working through athletes to give them the power to do all they can do,” she says. “The proposition that sports and religion might reflect each other had also not occurred to Andrew Crane, a Creighton student studying biology.

“The idea of sports intersecting with the spiritual and religious experience never crossed my mind until taking this course,” he says. “We discussed and dissected a wide variety of topics and views in class and asked important questions about why sports, as a part in beautiful moments, or to see these take place. In this way, sport has the potential to remind us that beauty is one of the ways we can encounter God.”

“Giving the Best of Yourself,” developed that thought. “For many of them, the super-competitive phase of their sports life is over, but a lot of them do see coaching in their future, and give them the power to do all they can do,” she says. “The classes we do on mentoring and coaching, where we use things like John Wooden’s Pyramid of Success as a basis, is one of the ways we can encounter God.”

“Giving the Best of Yourself” develops that thought. “During the spring semester, we often have our students watch the Super Bowl as a ritual model of what a sports liturgy looks like,” he says. “We look at the history of Christianity in sports and the shifting attitudes toward social justice and race and especially how sports either encourages humanization and justice or how it encourages greater injustice.”

“Religion, and the religious impulse, are foundational human characteristics, Carney says, and so students learn to recognize its presence, both in the current day and throughout history.”

“Many of our students have interest in coaching and may already be volunteer coaches,” he says. “I have found that the classes we do on mentoring and coaching, where we use things like John Wooden’s Pyramid of Success as a basis, is one of the ways we can encounter God.”

For Julia Staniszewski, a Creighton student pursuing a management and international business degree at the Heider College of Business, the course touched a religious disposition that already guides her life. “Though I am religious, I didn’t really think there was much to say about religion and spirituality in sports,” she says. “I couldn’t have been more wrong.”

“We spoke about different types of religious belief in sports, including directly praying to God, and even more spiritual takes where athletes sometimes mention feeling an aura from their sports. My main takeaway was that if you look at a problem or situation in sports, more likely than not, there will be a religious tie.”

“The modern secular world does not lack people who mock religious devotion even as they devotedly follow the efforts of 11 grown men to transport an oval piece of inflated leather across a white line located 100 yards away. Is this sporting devotion, with its significant expenditure of personal wealth, investment of time and endless debate and analysis, an expression of religious piety? In religious terms, can God use sports to touch the human soul in ways that saints and sages did in prior eras?”

Pope Francis certainly thinks so.

POPE FRANCIS: SPORTS CAN DEVELOP HOLINESS

In a 2018 letter to the Catholic Church’s Diocesan for Laity, Family and Life, marking publication of a church document titled “Giving the Best of Yourself: A Document on the Christian Perspective on Sport and the Human Person,” Francis says sports can develop holiness. “This pursuit puts us on the path that, with the help of God’s grace, can lead us to the fullness of life that we call holiness,” he wrote. “Sport is a very rich source of values and virtues that help us to become better people.”

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Vivian Relan, who is pursuing a degree in exercise science, said the course proved to be a big impact on students.

“People have reactions, personally, and emotionally relate to each other is a critical insight.”

Student-athletes should know that the course involves far more than watching and discussing ESPN highlights. The course is designed to guide student-athletes through the potential pitfalls of a new world in which large amounts of money potentially could come their way. "After taking the course, I now think spirituality is meant to enhance the experience people have with sports," Relan says. "Through playing and practicing, we have the ability to experience God's grace and recognize His presence."
Many a mom and dad have stood in the driveway waving goodbye as a turn signal announces a child’s journey to a new world of academic rigor. Too often, the newly minted college student was on his or her own. That, says Wayne Young Jr., PhD, BA ’93, vice provost for Student Success, is not the Creighton way.

“We are not going to keep family members on the sidelines,” he says. “For decades higher education did that, as in, ‘Thank you, we will take it from here’. At Creighton we say, ‘Oh no, we want that partnership, we want that engagement.’”

Young heads the newly created Division of Student Success, which helps students navigate the challenges inherent to entering a new world of unfamiliar people, a vaguely mysterious campus, schedules, fraternities and sororities and a long list of clubs and societies, not to mention deadlines and finals. The goal is to assist students in managing the culture, pressures and trials of college life so that four fleeting years later they walk proudly across the commencement stage.

As a recipient of the 2023 Pillar of the Profession Award, granted by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators to individuals who have distinguished themselves as leaders, teachers and scholars in student affairs and higher education, Young carries experience and reputation into his new role.

Part of the Division of Student Success is the Office of Student and Family Support. The inclusion of “family” in the title is purposeful as the office acts as a central point for parents or other responsible family members to seek student support.

“Young says, “That does not mean we won’t gently remind family members of their swim lane, and that their student is still responsible for their behavior, their decisions and their learning, but we know they want to see them succeed too, so we are happy to partner.”
“Students and their families can be confident that when they commit to Creighton, that Creighton commits to them.”

WAYNE YOUNG JR., PHD, BA ’93
Vice Provost for Student Success

Mary Ann Tietjen meets with students to discuss their student needs and to partner with complementary student services.

The Division of Student Success has a wide remit, encompassing undergraduate and preprofessional advising, student retention, academic coaching and tutoring, student accessibility services, Title IX Programs and the career center, all elements that can make or break the student experience.

The Success Center, located in the Reinert-Alumni Memorial Library, is the hub of the division’s work. A one-stop shop for undergraduate, graduate and professional students, it coordinates student services not just within its own office but also those available among Creighton’s nine schools and colleges.

Other services encompassed by the new division include the Office of Academic Success, the Center for Advising Resources and Support, the John P. Foley Career Center, Student Accessibility Services, the Office of Military and Veterans Affairs, and the Title IX Programs, which are federally funded services provided to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Mary Ann Tietjen, senior director of the Success Center, says the office uses conversations with students and families, along with data analysis, to identify student needs and to partner with complementary student services such as the Department of Residence Life.

“Success hubs” are an example of such partnerships. These hubs exist in Deglman, Kiewit and Swanson halls, all residence halls for first-year students, where they keep hours deep into the evening to help students with academic coaching, tutoring or general wayfinding needs.

“Last year alone, the Success Center served more than 30% of our undergraduate students,” Tietjen says. “With enhanced effort in the success hubs this year, we anticipate this number to grow.

“Students and their families can be confident that when they commit to Creighton, that Creighton commits to them. The Success Center is just one example that demonstrates the University's continued commitment to care personnel (care for the whole person).”

Not everyone who enters college knows what they will do after graduation. Distilling the fog that sometimes shrouds such decisions is the job of the Center for Advising Resources and Support (CARS), located in the Hixson-Lied Science Building.

“CARS is a clearinghouse, a switchboard for all things advising,” Young says. “In partnership with our schools and colleges, and with faculty, it provides pathways for undergraduate students to learn more about professional programs, and to figure out which one is right for them.

“That might involve shadowing, research, taking the right courses, all those kinds of things. Preprofessional advising is of paramount importance at Creighton because we get such great students and so we want to make sure they can get into the best professional programs.”

Student retention is a key concern as it is considered an indicator of a university’s ability to keep the promises made to students, which often requires managing the bumps in the road that every student encounters.

“Having a strong first- or second-year retention rate, having a strong graduation rate, is a very important way to show parents, students and family members that Creighton gets it done, that we hold up not just our end of the deal but that we enhance students’ lives, that we deliver on that dream that they were sold,” Young says.

“Student retention is about being managers of hope: Something might not be going well, but we coordinate with the student, with parents and family, with faculty, to make things right so that the student can continue.

“I would say that in the area of student retention, Creighton cannot be beat. Our level of service, the support we have here, the care personnel that we show students, to all the great things that we do as a university community, I just don’t think it can be beat, and I think our graduation and retention rates indicate that.”

Young pays close attention to first- and second-year retention rates, for these are the most vulnerable years when a student might feel overwhelmed, or sometimes worse, lonely.

“A lot of people assume cost is the primary reason people don’t continue their education,” Young says, “and sometimes that does cause a lot of stress. But we try every student who withdraws to understand why they leave, and although cost is among the top three or four reasons, the top reason is a lack of social and academic integration.

“For some reason, they have not built an affinity with us. Either they feel like they’re not connecting, or they haven’t gotten involved, or they haven’t met a faculty member or discovered a major or interest area that has really captured their mind or heart.

“For 15 years, Young says, Creighton’s second-year retention rate sat at a healthy 89.5%. During the past three years, he says, that rate has increased to 93%, which approaches the 95% to 96% achieved by universities considered among the nation’s elite.

Creighton’s six-year graduation rate, a commonly used window in higher education, is about 79%, a figure that far outpaces the 68% six-year rate for private nonprofit institutions nationally.

Students, of course, are first in line for plaudits as they cross the commencement stage, but their journey there reflects a team effort.

“Our retention and graduation rates are not the students’ success alone,” Young says. “They belong also to the University. Retaining a student takes the faculty it takes the Jesuits, it takes the resident assistants, it takes student government, it takes alumni, it takes the city too — sometimes you’re happy with an institution because you also love the city.”

Academics and faculty interactions are, of course, important, but so are financial aid packages, parent and family support, social and extracurricular activities, leadership, spirituality and networking opportunities, and the list goes on.

“It is a team effort, always,” Young says. “Student Success makes sure that all the various stakeholders are working together for the success of each and every student.”

Mary Ann Tietjen meets with students to discuss their student needs and to partner with complementary student services.
The Union Pacific Diversity Scholars program — formed in 2020 by a partnership between Union Pacific and the University — awards a $25,000-per-year scholarship to incoming freshmen for their full four years at Creighton. In that time, each student receives support, training and mentorship in diversity and inclusion approaches to their future careers. O’Neill and two of her fellow UP scholars share what being part of the program has meant to them.

What has this program meant to you? O’Neill: The program gives me networking and internship opportunities. It connects me with a Union Pacific mentor. It expands my knowledge and helps me gain real-world experience and build the relationships that will define my career.

What do you love about going to Creighton? O’Neill: I was born and raised Catholic, and I’ve been going to St. John’s Church as a parishioner since eighth grade. I already had a community here, and I felt like I could expand that community to the whole campus. I feel like I’ve accomplished that. I’m so excited to continue my life here.

What is the perfect fit? And the diversity aspect is, of course, important to me. It really shows them what they care.

Tashibimi: Moving to Omaha from California was kind of a leap of faith. But coming to Creighton knowing that I had the Union Pacific Scholars program, knowing that I had a group of people supporting me, it really helped me put both my feet in the water. Feeling the support of a community of people is truly a blessing.

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“I've watched standup forever and I liked the idea of gifting someone a genuine belly laugh, and that became a cool thing to strive for.”

Who knew that being the class clown in high school might signal a calling to BRITTANY MASCIO, BA’17, graduated from the College of Arts and Sciences with a degree in journalism and immediately began a successful, creative career.

She worked in Omaha with just Jumbl Films, an award-winning production company funded by the Sherwood Foundation that specializes in stories about public schools. Eventually becoming director of impact and marketing, she wrote more than 100 digital shorts, participated in more than 400 interviews, and co-produced eight documentary features, many of which were selected for U.S. and Canadian film festivals.

She also developed impact campaigns and orchestrated screening tours for films addressing such issues as poverty, English language learners and mental health. One project she’s working on is “Wanted: The Kids,” an initiative that in the wake of the widely acclaimed I Love Public Schools campaign, which included I Love Public Schools Day, a celebration nationally recognized by more than 3 million people.

Every time I spotted someone in an airport wearing an I Love Public Schools T-shirt or heard my voice on our commercials, I beamed with pride knowing our team had made a significant impact on support for public education. Mascio says.

She then began working with BrightFocus Foundation, which funds research to defeat Alzheimer’s and other diseases. One of her projects is helping produce a live talk show series, Brain In, Live, that counts entertainment and cutting-edge research.

But there was another creative outlet that she felt good. She remember to try my best and not be so hard on myself.”

“I come alive a little bit more when I share a story.”

One day her brother, Nick Mascio, BA’14, reminded her that comedy was something interesting but never took. After all, she had been the class clown in high school. She had to agree that was true.

But she got the idea ruminate. It felt good. She was funny. She liked making people laugh.

“I watched standup forever,” she says, “and I liked the idea of getting someone a genuine belly laugh, and that became a cool thing to strive for.”

She became involved with Omaha’s comedy scene and helped plan last summer’s Omaha Comedy Fest, which drew more than 70 acts at multiple venues, including AntBank Buffalo writer of Late Night with Seth Meyers. Mascio made a New York Times “Emerging from the Trenches” first official performance. This year in addition to performing, she will be the festival communications director.

She did something else in 2022. She decided to make a big move — from Omaha to Los Angeles — to explore a career in comedy.

Moving to L.A. feels like the right step in the right direction,” she says. She’s continuing other creative work, but she is driving head first into the comedy scene.

She took classes at the renowned Westside Comedy Theater, performs almost weekly at open mics, and accepts six-month intensive program that involves creating one-hour show comedy.

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She did something else in 2022. She decided to make a big move — from Omaha to Los Angeles — to explore a career in comedy.

Moving to L.A. feels like the right step in the right direction,” she says. She’s continuing other creative work, but she is driving head first into the comedy scene.

She took classes at the renowned Westside Comedy Theater, performs almost weekly at open mics, and accepts six-month intensive program that involves creating one-hour show comedy.

Every time I watched standup forever,” she says, “and I like the idea of getting someone a genuine belly laugh, and that became a cool thing to strive for.”

Mascio says.

She then began working with BrightFocus Foundation, which funds research to defeat Alzheimer’s and other diseases. One of her projects is helping produce a live talk show series, Brain In, Live, that counts entertainment and cutting-edge research.

But there was another creative outlet that she felt good. She remember to try my best and not be so hard on myself.”

“I come alive a little bit more when I share a story.”

One day her brother, Nick Mascio, BA’14, reminded her that comedy was something interesting but never took. After all, she had been the class clown in high school. She had to agree that was true.

But she got the idea ruminate. It felt good. She was funny. She liked making people laugh.
Belated response to the Nazis’ mass murder of European Jews.

Yet more than 20 years since his death, John Pehle, BA’30, was recently a key figure in the three-part PBS documentary series The U.S. and the Holocaust, directed by Ken Burns and his longtime creative partners Lynn Novick and Sarah Botstein. The series examines the American government’s press’ and related responses to the Nazis’ mass murder of European Jews. The series shows Pehle, a Treasury Department official, as one of the lone figures running against the grain of governmental indifference and obstruction amid the Holocaust. His outrage at his government’s, in particular the State Department’s, failure to act culminated in an 18-page report “On the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews.”

In January of 1944, Pehle presented his report to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He also handed him a drafted executive order to create a new government agency tasked with “the immediate rescue and relief of the Jews of Europe and other victims of enemy persecution.”

One week later, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9417 establishing the War Refugee Board. The order allotted $1 million to the agency. All other funding for rescue and relief efforts came from private sources. Pehle was appointed as the agency’s executive director. He was only 34.

After the war and shortly before its dissolution in 1945, the War Refugee Board estimated it had saved the lives of tens of thousands of Jews. Some historians have estimated the number at more than 200,000. – BY MICAH MERTES

Learn more: To hear more about Pehle and other fascinating figures in Creighton’s history, subscribe to Weird Creighton History on your favorite podcasting platform or at alumni.creighton.edu/weird-creighton-history.
Hope in the Heider College of Business.

Associate Professor Brad Klontz, PsyD. Klontz is named one of the “12 Inspiring Opportunity Knocks. That’s beautiful.” This is not work. It just feels like, wow, this is a life-changing, soul-changing thing. I learned that there was a science behind my work. I looked at what Dr. Klontz described to me then and realized that I wanted to capture it,” says Washington.


Kevin P. Green, ARTS, Omaha, Feb. 1, 2023.


Stephen M. Kent, MA, India.

Charles Harper, PhD, professor emeritus of sociology, College of Arts and Sciences, Jan. 15, 2023.

Frances L. Vandenheede, MSEdu, Omaha, Dec. 11, 2022.


Katharine C. Wilcox, BSBA, Lincoln, Nebraska, Dec. 6, 2022.


Carol Daufenbach, PhD, former associate professor, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, College of Arts and Sciences, Dec. 2, 2022.


David Gambal, PhD, former researcher/professor of biochemistry, School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, 2022.


R. Aaron Biejerman, BSBA, Lincoln, Nebraska, Dec. 6, 2022.

Theo W. Dwyer, Jr., BS, Columbus, Ohio, Dec. 20, 2022.


Garry J. Johnson, MIMFA’15, MBA, Midlothian, Virginia, April 7, 2022.
After leading the Creighton men's soccer team to the College Cup last season, Johnny Torres, BSW'08, is preparing for his fifth season as the team's head coach. Creighton magazine asked him to reflect on his time at Creighton as a player, a student, an assistant coach and now as leader of the men's soccer program.

How did you end up coming to Creighton in the first place?
Back in 1992, I was part of an Olympic development program, and the head coach of that group was Bret Simon, then the assistant men's soccer coach at Creighton. As a high school student, I was trying to figure out where I wanted to go and study and be able to compete.

Once I did take my official visit to Creighton, I realized what the atmosphere was like on campus. I sat in on a class where there was a lot of dialogue between the professor and the students, and everybody knew each other's names. I'm delighted that I made that decision back then. And it's made an influence and an imprint on my life and how it's been shaped. I couldn't be happier.

What was your college career like? You and the team were extremely successful.
It was awesome. Being a professional soccer player was always a life-long goal, but academics were important. When I got here, Creighton had already made a name for itself (in soccer). We just had a ball. I have some great memories.

You were drafted in your senior year and played in Major League Soccer for several years. Were you thinking about coaching or returning to Creighton?
I never knew exactly what I wanted to do after I was done playing. I was a soccer junkie, and I wanted to have soccer in my life. Thankfully, I was invited and recruited a second time by Bob Warming to come back and finish my degree. That's when I figured out, “Wow, I could really do this.” I really enjoyed giving back to the student-athletes in the same way that our coaches did for me back in the '90s. I decided this is what I wanted to do. I stayed on as an assistant coach and graduated with my degree in social work in 2008.

What brought you so much success this past season?
When I took the helm, the most important thing was to figure out what our identity was. When COVID-19 hit, it slowed everything a little bit, but we really got to focus on each other. That built the roots and the foundation of what it meant for us to be a team. Then last season, we had our identity, we had our confidence, and we had a lot of energy.

And like anything else — in sports or any part of life — you need a little bit of fortune or luck. And I thought we got that toward the latter part of the season. And, man, that was the beginning of one of the best runs I've seen in my entire career.

The success of the past season was fantastic. What is your vision for the program?
We are a national powerhouse. There are high standards. Every time we step on the field, the plan is to win. Not to compete or hold on. We're there to win.

In my recruiting process, we want to stay a successful program, but first and foremost, I recruit good human beings. I think what makes Creighton special is the community we have. And so for me, it's pivotal that we bring in quality human beings. Then I look for technical ability and work rate. We want to try and impose ourselves on our opponents and play attractive and exciting soccer for our fans.

How are you feeling this off-season?
I'm feeling great. We're full of energy, and we have a lot of familiar faces back. And we've got some new players coming in, too, which is always fun.

Torres Reflects on Creighton Career
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It sounds like you were focused on academics from the beginning. I was adopted at 9 years old. Growing up in Colombia in the '80s — before I was adopted — I dreamt of being a pro soccer player. But I knew my adoptive parents were not going to let me leave Creighton without getting as close as possible to graduating. I got drafted during my senior year, but I'm extremely proud that I was able to come back and finish my degree.

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

“I remember receiving my scholarship letter. I was so excited to experience the Creighton mission and join a community with values that match my own. I love being here, and I’m grateful for the opportunity.”

– AURORA RODRIGUEZ
MEDICAL STUDENT
PHOENIX CAMPUS