

Creighton  
UNIVERSITY

KINGFISHER INSTITUTE FOR THE LIBERAL ARTS AND PROFESSIONS

# Annual Report

2024-2025





# Cover Photo

**"The Path to Health Begins in the Classroom,"** by Eden Steinhilber, PA Program Class of 2026, School of Medicine; 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner, Social Determinants of Health category, "Envisioning Population Health" photo contest

Eden writes: "This photo, taken in a classroom in Ruhengeri, Rwanda, illustrates the deep connection between education, nutrition, and population health. The worn shoes and bare concrete walls reflect the challenges these children face including food insecurity, resource constraints, and limited health literacy. For many, a cup of cornmeal porridge provided at school is their only meal of the day. Without electricity, adequate school supplies, or proper nutrition, these students experience barriers that affect their cognitive development, well-being, and long-term health.

At Creighton University, we benefit from advanced technologies, dedicated instructors, and access to resources—factors that shape both academic success and health. This contrast highlights the importance of addressing social determinants of health and ensuring equitable access to education and basic needs. By strengthening health literacy and advocating for global health equity, we can empower individuals with the tools necessary for healthier communities. Recognizing these disparities allows us to create change, improving well-being both within our local communities and across the world."



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# Visiting Fellows Program

*Kingfisher Visiting Fellows are carefully selected to bring expertise and ideas that complement areas at Creighton University. Their visits focus on engaging intentionally with targeted audience groups.*

## Sarah Blanton, PT, DPT

Sarah Blanton, PT, DPT, a professor in the Division of Physical Therapy at Emory University School of Medicine, was our spring 2025 visiting fellow.

Blanton is an NIH-funded researcher, with active grants exploring the integration of family care partners into the rehabilitation process. She is the founding editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Humanities in Rehabilitation (JHR)*, an international peer-reviewed journal using a collaborative model with scholars, clinicians, patients, and their families to understand the lived experience of disability.

From March 17-19, 2025, she met with various groups and classes at Creighton, bringing her expertise to complement Creighton's focus on whole-person, humanistic healthcare. Her busy week included:

- talking with undergraduate pre-health students
- presenting to the Pi Theta occupational therapy honor club (photo below is Blanton [far left] with the Pi Theta students)
- presenting to the neurorehabilitation student board (OT and PT students) and
- consulting with the physical therapy and occupational therapy curriculum committees.

In partnership with the Center for Faculty Excellence, Blanton presented on **"Building Bridges Between Scholarship and Lived Experience"** as part of a panel with **Brooke Kowalke, PhD**, assistant professor of English, **Marion Russell, OTD**, assistant professor of occupational therapy, **Kimberly Somers, PT, DPT**, assistant professor of physical therapy (Phoenix), and **Gail Jensen, PhD, PT**, professor of physical therapy and vice provost for learning and assessment.

"Sarah Blanton's visit with our curriculum committee was very relevant. She gave us good thoughts and feedback on how to implement components of the humanities into our courses, with direct correlation to improving communication and patient care. She gave specific examples of how she uses the humanities to assist learners in developing appropriate communication and interaction with patients."

*-Jennifer Furze, PT, DPT, FAPTA, professor of physical therapy*





# Humanities and Health Justice Pathways Program

*Initially funded through a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the program shows first-generation college students ways that the humanities illuminate the practice of healthcare.*

## “Reimagining Care” Course

Using *The People’s Hospital: Hope and Peril in American Medicine*, by Ricardo Nuila, MD, in conjunction with multimedia poetry materials from partner Verse Video Education | Poetry in America, this one-credit course (TSC 145: Reimagining Care) invited students to view health justice through the lenses of art, poetry, history, and other humanistic disciplines.

Five first-generation college students completed the course in spring 2025. In the service of connecting first-gen students with faculty, instructors alternated between Dr. Leavelle and the following:

- **Andrew Hogan, PhD**, Fr. Henry W. Casper, SJ, Professor of History, Associate Professor of History
- **Brooke Kowalke, PhD**, Assistant Professor of English
- **Trish Ross, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures
- **Rachel Mindrup, MFA**, Richard L. Deming, MD, Endowed Chair in Medical Humanities, Associate Professor of Drawing and Painting
- **Jim F. Smith, MD**, DBioethics, Professor of Medical Education

A highlight was partnering with the College of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Fellows program for a live virtual conversation with Dr. Nuila (see below left, pre-pharmacy student Timo Camo, and below right, Faith Genzlinger, pre-medical student, asking questions at the event).

## What's Next

Support from our colleagues in Student Success, especially the Student Success Services program, has been essential. For summer 2025, we partnered on a virtual summer bridge program for their incoming first-year students. Our goal is for this experience to become an on-ramp for both the college experience and the pathway, the next step of which will be taking the "Reimagining Care" seminar.

Unfortunately, the grant for this program from the National Endowment for the Humanities was abruptly terminated on April 1 as part of sweeping DOGE cuts. Work on developing the next steps of the pathway, including seeking funding, continues.



"TSC 145 allows healthcare-bound first-generation college students to see the highest highs and the lowest lows of being a healthcare provider. Additionally, getting to pick Dr. Nuila’s brain at the end of the semester was enriching.

*-Faith Genzlinger, Arts & Sciences, Class of 2027*



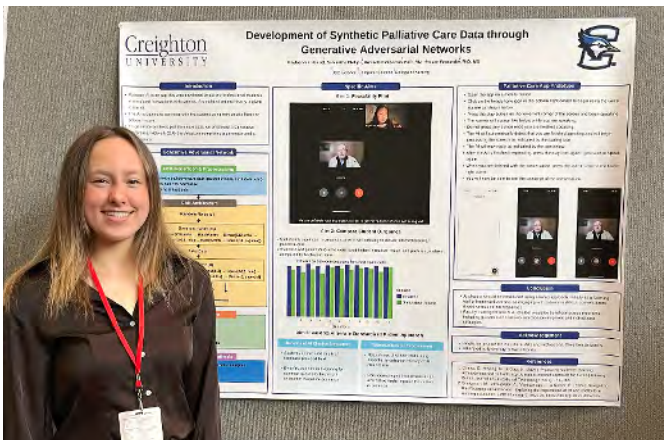


# Research and Scholarly Activity

## Mini-Seminar Presentations and Updates

In the mini-seminar, a cohort of small interdisciplinary teams develop a scholarly or creative project throughout an academic year. On Sept. 27, the 2023-2024 participants presented their work from the past year. New and past participants alike were invited to connect with one another and hear about other projects.

**Amanda Kirkpatrick, PhD, RN**, professor in the College of Nursing and **Steven Fernandes, PhD**, assistant professor in Computer Science presented on: **"Enhancing Compassionate Palliative Care with AI: Respecting Human Dignity and Cultural Diversity."** **Kaylee Van Handel**, a data science major who worked as a research assistant on the project, also was present. Van Handel and fellow student researchers **Samantha Phillips** (below) and **Cole Krudwig** presented work resulting from this project at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) in April 2025.



**Lindsay Iverson, DNP**, associate professor, and **Teresa Jizba, DNP**, assistant professor, College of Nursing, presented on the project they started with colleagues **Andrew Eckhart, BS, NRP, EMS-I** and **Ryan Batenhorst, EdD, MEd, NRP**, of the Paramedicine program: **"LifeSavers: An Interprofessional Critical Care Escape Room."** Iverson and Jizba presented at the Society for Simulation in Healthcare conference and the NEXUS Summit in 2024. They also expanded the activity to include additional professions, and it was added to the slate of interprofessional education passport activities for Creighton health professions students.



**Faith Kurtyka, PhD**, associate professor of English, presented on **"Helping Pre-Health Students Write Personal Statements."** After the seminar, Kurtyka extended the work by partnering with Steven Fernandes, PhD, to develop a custom chatbot to give feedback on medical school personal statements. Kurtyka presented this research with Cole Krudwig, one of Fernandes' students, at the Nebraska Academy of Sciences Conference in April 2025. The personal statement feedback chatbot will be piloted in pre-med seminars this fall and spring.

**Angela Lampe, OTD, OTR/L**, associate professor, and **Brenda Coppard, PhD, OTR/L**, professor, Occupational Therapy, presented on their **"Collaborative Scholarly and Creative Project between SPAHP Department of Occupational Therapy and Heider College of Business Accounting Department"** on behalf of their group. Since the seminar, they continue to offer the activity they developed in the accounting and occupational therapy curriculum, have given four presentations, and have submitted an article for publication.



*Tracy Leavelle talks with mini-seminar faculty participants.*





# Research and Scholarly Activity

*Mini-Seminar Projects: 2024-2025: These teams met throughout the academic year and presented the outcomes of their work in September 2025.*

## Addressing Mental Health Needs via Occupational Therapy Integration into Group Prenatal Visits

**Diva Wilson, MD**, Assistant Professor and Clinician Educator, Department of Family and Community Medicine, School of Medicine; Family Medicine Physician, CHI Health

**Andrea Thinnies, OTD, OTR/L**, Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy; School of Pharmacy & Health Professions

**Megan McClain**, MD student, and **Lauren Banks**, OT student

## Determining Exposure to Recruitment and Self-Perceived Risk to Human Trafficking Among U.S. Population

**Sarbinaz Bekmuratova, PhD**, Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy

**Yongyue Qi, PhD**, Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy

**Rochelle L. Dalla, PhD**, Professor of Child, Youth and Family Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Daniela Ameijeiras Mena**, occupational therapy student (Regis campus); **Nick Nondorf**, Heider College of Business undergraduate (pre-OT) student; **Emma Dubisz**, occupational therapy student

## Beyond the Rational: Tracing an Interdisciplinary Vocabulary of the Intangible

**Surbhi Malik, PhD**, Associate Professor of English

**Britta McEwen, PhD**, Associate Professor of History

**Jill Brown, PhD**, Professor of Psychological Science

*For more on this project, see the feature in the spring 2025 Creighton Magazine:*

[www.creighton.edu/news/faculty-collaborate-study-dreams-emotions-and-knowledge](http://www.creighton.edu/news/faculty-collaborate-study-dreams-emotions-and-knowledge)





# Curriculum Innovation

*We promote curriculum innovation by awarding grants to faculty who commit to revising their course or creating a course that embraces Kingfisher areas of emphasis.*

## 2024-2025 Recipients

- **Kimberley Begley, PharmD**, Professor of Pharmacy Practice: Enhancing Competency-Based Training in Pharmacy Through Longitudinal Simulation-Based Entrustable Professional Activity (EPA)
- **Christian L. Janousek, JD, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science and International Relations: Political Science/Health Administration and Policy (PLS/HAP) 334: Public Policy and Healthcare
- **Miranda Little, OTD, OTR/L, PMH-C**, Assistant Professor, Occupational Therapy: Maternal and Infant Health Specialty Track
- **Shawn Magrum, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Exercise Science & Pre-Health Professions: Humanistic Anatomy in EXS 331
- **Margo Minnich DNP, RN**, Associate Professor, and **Becky Davis, DNP, RN**, Assistant Professor, College of Nursing: Population-Based Health Concepts II: Integrating Sustainable Development Goals
- **Jacob Rump, PhD**, Associate Professor, Dept. of Philosophy: PHL 433 Philosophy and Ethics of Artificial Intelligence
- **Peggy Rupprecht, PhD**, Associate Professor, Dept. of Computing, Design and Journalism: "Focused on feedback: Introducing "un-grading" in an upper-level public relations course, JRM 445"
- **Tyler Talbott, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Department of English: ENG 220 Queer Literature and Cinema



Dr. Rupprecht taught the revised class in spring 2025. One student team's campaign was selected by local professionals to compete in the national Public Relations Student Society of American (PRSSA) competition. Their "Soaring for Life" National Organ Donor Awareness Competition campaign won second place! Pictured below left, team members are **Abbie Gallant, Lydia Engebretson, Susanna Hernandez, Brennan Jacobs, Andrew Kresin, and Kaelyn Caniglia.**

## 2023-2024 Recipient Outcomes

**"Fostering Connection: An Innovative Assignment to Confront Isolation in the EdD Program Online Learning Environment:" Candace Bloomquist, PhD, EdD, Interdisciplinary Leadership Program**

Bloomquist found that, "The exercise of creating [a Renga] poem together helped students see their connections with one another and bolstered their sense of belonging and identity with their classmates."

**"Plant & Herb Propagation Collective: Gold Track Activity:" Rachel Jones, MAEd, School of Medicine Student Affairs (Phoenix)**

The poster highlighting this project's outcomes tied for first place for "best poster" at University Research Days on April 1, 2025. In addition to Jones (pictured below left), medical students Jason Becker (pictured), Madeline Trotter (pictured), Rawan Khatid, and Izabella Lach contributed.





# Engagement and Partnerships

*We continue our commitment to offering uniquely valuable opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to engage with one another, with the wider community, and with interdisciplinary perspectives.*

## Nebraska Justice Summit

Creighton University served as the site of the inaugural Nebraska Justice Summit. This historic event was organized by NAACP leader Betty Andrews, who helped found the Iowa Summit on Justice & Disparities over twelve years ago with the goal of addressing the disproportionate rate of incarceration of African Americans and other minorities. Iowa has since experienced improvements in its rates of disproportionate incarceration. In Nebraska, Ms. Andrews said, Black citizens are incarcerated at a rate nine times that of the White incarceration rate, with similar over-representation of other minority groups and with related juvenile justice system concerns, making it similarly ripe for change.

It was a truly collaborative effort, engaging leaders in local government and law enforcement with legal professionals, nonprofit leaders, and other justice advocates. Joy Suder, director of the School of Law's juvenile justice clinic, was one panelist. With Creighton's sponsorship through the Kingfisher Institute and the Division of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, several faculty and staff were able to attend the summit.

In addition to panels and breakout sessions, Yusuf Salaam, New York City Council member, bestselling author, justice advocate, and one of the "Central Park Five" – now "The Exonerated Five" – gave a rousing keynote.



## "Belong" and National Day of Racial Healing event

As part of MLK Week, we partnered with the Division of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and the Department of Fine and Performing Arts to observe the National Day of Racial Healing. Adding to the Division's successful series of "Belong" events for faculty and staff engagement, musician and facilitator Andrea Joy Pearson offered a soothing sonic "sound bath." Attendees then gathered for a social, and Pearson hosted a similar experience for students. Human Resources gave points in the Navigate wellness platform for participating.







# Engagement and Partnerships

## MLK Book Club on its Third Year in a Row

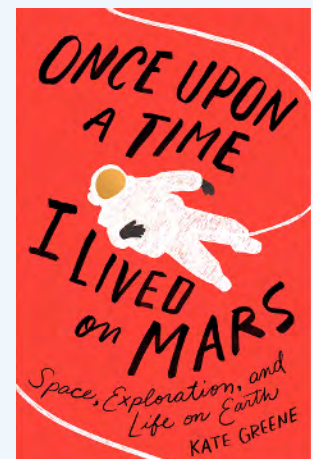
About 35 staff and faculty signed up to read Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s final book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*. The book contains the inspiration for the 2025 MLK Week theme, "Chaos or Community." Charise Alexander Adams and Kate Malott, communication specialist in University Communications and Marketing, hosted the group in Omaha. For the first time, Phoenix faculty and staff participated in a parallel group led by Danielle Okezie of the Institute for Population Health.

Among post-survey respondents, 71% responded that participating in the group increased their sense of belonging at Creighton.

## Kate Greene: *Once Upon a Time I Lived on Mars*

Writer and scientist Kate Greene gave a public reading from her book, *Once Upon a Time I Lived on Mars*, a "science memoir" about her time in a NASA-funded Mars simulation. With a background in physics and poetry, Greene's unique perspective drew audience members from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Ted Wheeler's ENG 301 Narrative Forms and Dave Mullins' Creative Writing ENG 300 classes each enjoyed a visit from Greene. The English Department and the College of Arts and Sciences helped support the March 2025 visit to campus.



*"As a student studying both chemistry and English, I loved meeting Kate Greene and hearing about her experience combining [two] disciplines."*

*- Maggie Schaeffer, College of Arts & Sciences Class of 2026*

*"Thank you for including me, and my students, in the dinner and event with Kate Greene. What an enriching evening that was for all of us."*

*- Jack Gabel, PhD, Associate Professor, Physics Department*



# Engagement and Partnerships

## "Teaching with Film" Series

With the Office of Sustainability Programs and 2024-2025 Sustainability Fellow in the Center for Faculty Excellence **Adam Sundberg, PhD**, associate professor of history, we hosted two film showings with discussions. The films were selected to complement a workshop on teaching with film, offered by Sundberg, and to explore the potential and pitfalls of activist strategies as responses to the climate crisis.

We watched the feature film "How to Blow up a Pipeline" on Feb. 24. It portrayed the impact of the climate crisis on individuals and what happens when the glacial pace of systemic change spurs them to extreme actions.

The second event on April 22 featured portions of "A Force More Powerful" and "How to Bring Down a Dictator," documentaries from the National Center for Nonviolent Conflict (NCNC) that document nonviolent resistance movements in the U.S. and abroad. Ivan Marovic, a veteran of the grassroots movement to oust Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and an affiliate of NCNC, called in to answer audience questions.

Dr. Sundberg was joined by **Richard Miller, PhD**, professor in the Department of Theology, **Ryan Wishart, PhD**, assistant professor in the Department of Cultural & Social Studies, and **Anne Ozar, PhD**, associate professor of philosophy, in framing and facilitating the discussions.

We hope to co-host similar events in the 2025-2026 academic year.



*A student makes a point during discussion following the film "How to Blow Up a Pipeline."*



# Engagement and Partnerships

## Partnering with the Institute for Population Health

Creighton's Institute for Population Health created the Envisioning Population Health Student Photo Contest in 2023, and we were invited to support year two of the successful initiative. We helped choose the themes of Mental Health and Well-Being, Planetary Health, and Social Determinants of Health. We matched the cash awards that the student winners received from IPH with contributions to Omaha and Phoenix nonprofits, selected by the first-prize winners. Community partners and students met at award luncheons in Omaha and Phoenix.

Organizations and first-place winners were:

- **Completely Kids** – selected by **Joshua Hart**, School of Pharmacy and Health Professions (Omaha)
- **Heart Ministry Center** – **Steven Nguyen**, College of Arts and Sciences
- **The Stephen Center** – **Ela Paske**, Heider College of Business
- **Special Olympics Arizona** – **Olivia Pasquale**, School of Medicine (Phoenix)
- **Society of St. Vincent de Paul** – **Katrina Ostrom** and **Dillon Cardindale**, School of Medicine (Phoenix)



Of her photo, "Pre-Meet Jitters," above, Olivia Pasquale said: "The gentle pat on the back offered in this photo [at the Special Olympics Arizona 2024 Summer Games] captures what I believe is the essence of mental health and well-being: friendship and connection."





# Engagement and Partnerships

## Health Humanities Lyceum: Spiritual Narratives of Health and Illness

Creighton students, faculty, and staff don't shy away from the difficult discussions that can arise when spirituality and healthcare meet. At the October 2024 health humanities lyceum, panelists shared their stories of faith, spirituality, health, illness, and healthcare with fellow Creighton community members. The goal of the lyceums, held once or twice per year, is to provide space for discussion on timely topics in health humanities education and practice.

Our very interdisciplinary group of panelists included:

- **Rev. Thomas F. Backer, MA, MDiv, BCC, CCE** – Resident Assistant Professor, Department of Theology
- **Joseph M. Bolil, DDS, MAGD** – Assistant Professor, Oral Health Promotion, School of Dentistry
- **Kevin J. Embach, SJ, MD** – Assistant Professor, School of Medicine
- **Jacob Favino, D4 student**, School of Dentistry
- **Celeste Sully Feuerbach, MA** – Chaplain, School of Pharmacy & Health Professions and School of Dentistry
- **Helene Lohman, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA**, Professor of Occupational Therapy
- **Ren Roecker**, medical anthropology and sociology student, Class of 2025



*Dental student (D4) Jacob Favino reflects on how he and fellow students integrate their faith into their classroom and clinical work.*



# Engagement and Partnerships

## More Co-sponsored Events and Collaborations

- With Menard Family Center for Economic Inquiry, co-hosted **book launch event for *Rediscovering Turtle Island***, by Taylor Keen, instructor in the Heider College of Business (Sept. 2024)
- With Creighton University Health Sciences Phoenix, co-sponsored "**The Beauty of Autism—Visual Art and Poetry**," featuring the photography of Blair Bunting and a keynote by poet Sheila Black of the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing at Arizona State University (October 2024)
- With Kenefick Chair in the Humanities, co-sponsored the annual **Kenefick Lecture: "Nazis of Copely Square"** featuring Fr. Charles R. Gallagher, SJ, Professor of History at Boston College and 2024-2025 Wade Chair at Marquette University (Feb. 2025)
- With the Center for Interprofessional Practice, Education and Research (CIPER): **"Inter-Expressional: Creative Expression and Ignatian Reflection for Health Expressions Learners"** multi-part interprofessional passport activity completed by 27 students from Dentistry, Graduate Nursing, Pharmacy, and Public Health programs (March/April 2025)
- With Fine and Performing Arts, co-sponsored the workshop, **"Unleash Your Voice! Science-based Applications from the Field of Vocology to Attain a Reliable, Powerful, and Lasting Voice"** (Nov. 2024)
- With the Medical Humanities Department, co-hosted **welcome reception for poet-in-residence Janna Lopez, MFA** (May 2025)

## Michael Zirulnik, PhD: Mini Visiting Fellowship

Michael Zirulnik wears several hats: he is the assistant vice president for Phoenix development, teaches medical humanities, and is an artist working in unique 3D media. Alongside an exhibition of his work, "Strips and Needles: A Day in the Life," at the Lied Art Gallery, Zirulnik visited with art classes and student groups for a "mini fellowship" of sorts.

The Lied Art Gallery and the Richard L. Deming MD Endowed Chair in Medical Humanities led the efforts to bring Zirulnik to Omaha. His exhibition, which explores one year of life with Type I Diabetes, saw more than 600 visitors over 30 days.





# Advisory Council

*We thank our advisory council members for their valuable time and support.*

**Candace Bloomquist, PhD:** Associate Professor, Interdisciplinary EdD in Leadership Program

**Lizzy Curran, MS:** Director of Alumni: Heider College of Business, School of Law and Graduate School

**Joy Doll, OT, OTD:** Program Director, Health Informatics Program

**Gintaras Duda, PhD:** Professor and Chair of Physics

**Fr. Kevin FitzGerald, SJ, PhD, PhD:** Chair of Medical Humanities

**Ayushi Kaul:** M2 student, School of Medicine; Creighton alumna, BS'20

**Christine Keith, DDS:** Assistant Professor, General Dentistry

**Rachel Mindrup, MFA:** Associate Professor of Fine & Performing Arts, Richard L. Deming MD Endowed Chair in Medical Humanities

**Margo Minnich, DNP:** Associate Professor, College of Nursing

**Patrick Murray, PhD:** Professor of Philosophy, John C. Kenefick Faculty Chair in the Humanities

**Kirk Peck, PT, PhD, CSCS, CCRT, CERP:** Associate Professor of Physical Therapy

**Nicole Piemonte, PhD:** Associate Dean, School of Medicine (Phoenix)

**Sarah Singletary Walker, PhD:** Professor of Management





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Transcendent Perspectives for Transcendent Problems

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Creighton  
UNIVERSITY

2500 California Plaza  
Omaha, NE 68178

[creighton.edu/kingfisherinstitute](https://creighton.edu/kingfisherinstitute)