Faculty Mission Survey

Executive Summary

A solid base of Creighton University’s full and part-time faculty understand and value its Catholic Jesuit mission. However much work remains to be done in helping faculty apply the mission to their daily work in their departments and classrooms.

This is the major finding of an online questionnaire that the University Partners in Mission Committee sent to 752 faculty members. Some 238 faculty members responded but due to a low number of responses from some colleges, it would be questionable to draw inferences about faculty support for mission in some of them.

The survey was aimed at obtaining a snapshot of what the faculty knows and feels about Creighton’s Catholic Jesuit mission and how it affects their academic lives. There is no pretense that the findings are statistically valid but open-ended questions elicited feedback that demonstrates that many faculty members not only understand the mission but care passionately about how Creighton implements it. As hoped, the survey suggests pathways for future mission promotion work.

Overview of Major Findings

Here is an overview of the major findings and responses to specific questions. The survey received 238 responses distributed as follows: 86 – Arts and Sciences, 73 – No school/college identified, 26 – Pharmacy/Health Professions, 13 – College of Business, 13 – School of Nursing, 10 – Dentistry, 9 – Medicine, 8 – Law. Some 180 responded to the survey when it was first sent and 58 to a follow up email reminding faculty to respond. Numbers of usable responses varied from question to question and percentages should be regarded only as indicating trends. According to Dr. Stephanie Wernig of the Office of Institutional Research, there were no discernible differences in the patterns of responses of the two response groups that is somewhat atypical for such surveys. On a survey that allowed people to make negative comments (and in which some identifying information was deliberately omitted on the follow-up email), some strongly negative comments might have been expected. The fact that they did not can be viewed as a positive.

• Overall, more than 80% of the 166 faculty who submitted responses said they understand and value Creighton’s Catholic Jesuit mission while only 9% said they were either indifferent to the mission and 3% said they find mission talk threatening.

• Nearly 80% of all respondents said they regard Creighton’s Catholic Jesuit mission as central to its identity and only a handful rated it as unimportant.

• In contrast, only about half the respondents felt that the mission has much impact on their colleges or departments. Midpoint responses to the question’s 5-point scale (which usually indicate uncertainty or indifference) were higher in all other units than the responses to the question about the university as a whole,

• Lectures by experts and participation in service programs were the two most popular forms of future mission promotion while taking an online course and participating in webinars were the least popular.
Discussion of Findings

According to Dr. Wernig, the 30% response rate to this survey was sufficient to get a “pretty good” sense of faculty attitudes towards the mission. “The survey suggests that the climate for mission promotion is positive,” she said. “A base has been laid but there is work to do.” The Partners in Mission Committee will need to study and further explore the information obtained in two open-ended questions, one of which asked faculty to define the mission and the other which asked for suggestions for mission implementation.

Faculty definitions of the mission stressed faith in action, educating the whole person, Ignatian charisms such as finding God in all things, educating students to be women and men for others etc. They cited service trips and projects, ILAC, Justice and Peace Studies, the Center for Service and Justice, the One World Clinic and similar endeavors as examples of the mission in action.

The open-ended suggestions for future mission work included several ideas that might be readily implemented including offering staff the opportunity to participate in something similar to the Faculty Mission and Identity Group, linking mission with sound pedagogy, forming groups where people could talk about how to link God and family with work, offering short courses (possibly online) on ethical thinking, offering programs at a variety of times to promote faculty attendance and finding ways to connect adjunct faculty more closely with the University and its mission.

There was some sentiment that Creighton needs to better integrate mission into the workplace including the way it pays and treats employees. In addition, several respondents expressed fears that emphasizing mission will lead to the alienation or exclusion of non-Catholics.

In summary, this survey suggests that Creighton has done a reasonably good job about educating faculty about the nature of its mission but should:

• Find ways of relating mission to work in colleges and departments

• Be sensitive to the need for religious inclusivity to address fears such as those indicated by the faculty member above

• Find concrete ways to address the just work-place issues that concern employees, including faculty members.