Dear Reader:

As University President, I spend much time pondering the identity and direction of our institution. After years of such meditations, I have concluded that our identity derives from our heritage and beliefs and that it is only by meditating on that heritage and these beliefs that we can draw a clear picture of who we are and where we are going.

Some of you are already part of Creighton University, teaching in our schools and colleges or working in our programs. Others are thinking of joining us, as students, as faculty, or as staff. As you try to come to a decision, I invite you to focus with me on three aspects of our identity. Creighton is a University, Jesuit, and Catholic. These three facets form the core of our identity. From these concepts come the directions for our daily activity, as well as our long-term plans. I invite you to join me as we think about who we are, dream about what we will become, and realize our mission and vision.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Morrison, S.J.
President
A University

The dictionary tells us that a university is "an institution of learning of the highest level, having a college of liberal arts and a program of graduate studies together with several professional schools and faculties..."

Looking at Creighton today, you will see we fit the definition fully with nine schools and colleges, undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs, and 6,000 students from all over the world. But this complexity was probably far from the thoughts of Mary Lucretia Creighton when she established Creighton University.

Edward Creighton and his younger brother John had come to Omaha in the 1850's. Edward was primarily responsible for the laying of the transcontinental telegraph lines from Omaha to the west coast and his financial interests became a major force in the economic development of Omaha. He died in 1874 and his widow shortly thereafter. In her will, she specifically directed that a college be established "known as Creighton University." Her executors purchased the northwest corner of 24th and California Streets, built a school building, and transferred the land to the Bishop
of Omaha. That land and building are still part of Creighton University.

Bishop O'Connor asked the Jesuits to operate the college in 1873, and the school was opened in September of that year. Since at the time there were few institutions in Omaha that prepared their students for college level work, much of the initial teaching in the college was at a secondary school level. It was not until 1891 that the first baccalaureate degree was awarded.

In 1892, John Creighton — Edward's brother — established the John A. Creighton School of Medicine and founded a two-hundred bed hospital that was to be known as The Creighton Memorial Saint Joseph Hospital. The Hospital became and continues to be the primary resource for clinical instruction in the Health Sciences.

The expansion and diversification continued as a Law School was established in 1904, again thanks to John Creighton. In 1905 a Dental School was added and in the same year the University purchased the Omaha College of Pharmacy which had opened in Fremont five years earlier.

In 1878, Bishop O'Connor asked the Jesuits to operate Creighton

The next addition came in 1920 when the Creighton College of Commerce, Accounts and Finance was opened in response to the educational needs of World War I veterans. In 1956 the College's name was changed to the College of Business Administration.

A Dean of Graduate Studies was appointed in 1926 and this marked the beginnings of a Graduate School. In 1971, the Graduate School conferred its first Ph.D.

Nursing was added to the college's curriculum in 1928. The initial program provided two years of liberal arts studies to be taken in conjunction with the nursing programs at various Catholic hospitals. Creighton had no control over the clinical portions of the studies and in 1955 severed its ties with the hospitals and began to offer a full BSN program within the College of Arts and Sciences. In 1971 a freestanding College of Nursing was established and the name was changed to the School of Nursing in 1979.

A separately administered Summer Session
A university is not only its programs, but also its people

was established in 1969. In the mid-70's that office expanded to become The Summer Session and Lifelong Learning Center, which was responsible for meeting the needs of growing numbers of nontraditional students. Absorbing the Lifelong Learning Center and later the Summer Session, University College was created in 1983 to make credit courses and degree opportunities available to the same population.

The growth of the last 100 years has taken Creighton from its 1878 enrollment of 120 boys to its 1989 enrollment of more than 6,000, half of whom are women. A University is not only its programs but also its people, and on both these accounts Creighton is one of the most diverse institutions of its size in the country. Our students come from across the country and across the oceans to study in areas ranging from art to anatomy, from law to literature, from history to histology. At Commencement each year, degrees are awarded from the Bachelor of Arts through professional degrees to the Ph.D.

In all these settings, schools and colleges,
Creighton's pursuit of excellence is dynamic, committed, and creative. In the past year we have been cited by U.S. News and World Report as one of the leading comprehensive universities in this part of the country. At the same time, we continue to strive to contain costs to allow access to our programs by as broad a spectrum of society as possible. Our success in this regard has been recognized by Changing Times, in which Creighton has been listed as one of the best values in the country in private higher education.

Excellence in a university, however, is like a patchwork quilt of the individual accomplishments of its faculty, and we have much to proclaim with pride. Our faculty members are involved in outstanding research and scholarship, leading their professions in areas from bone density to positron emission tomography, from biblical exegesis to ethics in the professions, from peptides to Jewish culture, from jury instructions to photography. We are all ennobled and energized by the discoveries, the insights, and the accomplishments of these faculty members.
In attempting to define the university facet of our identity, I have concluded that our history and our buildings and our accreditations do not make us a university. Our people, their activities, and their accomplishments do. Learned men and women committed to advancing the frontiers of knowledge and to sharing their learning with our students — these people make Creighton a university, diverse in programs, expanding in offerings, and striving constantly for the highest excellence in all our endeavors.
In addition to its identity as a university, Creighton has a special dimension — Creighton is Jesuit. The thoughts that follow are my thoughts, my vision, as a member of the Society of Jesus. But they are also a key to the Creighton identity.

Because of my background and formation as a Jesuit, I — and my brothers in the Society — see education as a religious ministry in service of my God and my church through work with young people.

What is a Jesuit education? The term refers to a long tradition, going back to the 17th and 18th centuries, when the Jesuits were known as the Schoolmasters of Europe. Here in the United States, for 200 years, Jesuit education has stood for something special — a tradition of quality, an education that prepared people for life, for success, for the attainment of goals.

But there is another dimension to Jesuit education, a deeper, more fundamental dimension. Perhaps this dimension is best approached through a question: “Why have Jesuits been committed to education for over 400 years?”

The answer to this question arises from Jesuit spirituality. The Jesuit vision of education is tied to our vision of God.

As you know, the Jesuits, the Society of Jesus, was founded in 1540 by a Spanish nobleman, Ignatius of Loyola. A member of the minor nobility of Spain, Ignatius was fighting in a war for his king when he was seriously wounded. During his convalescence he underwent a spiritual conversion and devised a regime of prayer known as the Spiritual Exercises. These Spiritual Exercises are the guidelines that form Jesuit spirituality. They shape whatever a Jesuit does, and determine how Jesuits view the mission of education.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are not a book to be read or a philosophy to be summarized superficially in a paragraph or two. Nor can they be adequately defined in words. The Spiritual Exercises must be experienced to be understood. The full program of prayer and meditation outlined in the Spiritual Exercises takes a month, but shorter versions
are more common. Each Jesuit makes the formal month-long Exercises at least twice in his career and annually in an abbreviated eight-day version. Out of this repeated experience of the Exercises grows the Jesuit or Ignatian spirituality.

The overwhelming and all-consuming realization reached in making the Spiritual Exercises is the fact of God’s love—the depth and breadth and length and height of the love of

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The whole of reality is seen as a positive gift given by God in his overwhelming love

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God for humankind in general and for each individual in particular.

As a result of this overwhelming experience of God’s love, the Jesuit sees the whole of reality in a different way. The world is now a gift of God’s love. It is a gift given to us for our use. The whole of reality is seen then not as an indifferent or a neutral object, but as a positive gift given by God in His overwhelming love and given for the use of each individual.

This world view of reality as a gift of God’s love to us transforms our vision of reality. The things around us are not merely neutral; the world is here specifically for us as part of a divine, loving plan. There is a desire then to know all the details of this plan, a desire to understand all facets of God’s gift of love to us in the reality of creation.

The love of God leads the Jesuit to a desire not only to know God but also to share him with others in all his manifestations in order that they also may know and experience God’s love. The spirituality created by the Spiritual
Exercises creates a drive to know, a drive to be educated, a drive to teach others about the realities that God has given us in his loving plan. Jesuits want to be educators, want to be researchers, want to be teachers precisely because they see the whole of reality that is studied and learned and taught and researched as a gift from God, a gift of God given for our use. As the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins put it: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.”

Moreover, to the Jesuit, God is not someone “out there,” distant, transcendent. Rather, to the Jesuit, God is imminent, close at hand, working and loving and acting and guiding through each part of his creation to draw us closer through knowledge of him in his creation.

To the Jesuit, God has revealed himself to humankind in two ways. First, God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ as we find him in both the Old and New Testaments. But God has also revealed himself in nature. In his creation God has given all things to us for our use and has revealed himself in these things telling us of his love, his care, his concern for us. Hopkins again: “Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.”

The incredible fact of the Incarnation of God not only ennobles humankind, but also elevates the whole of created reality

We have in the University a Theology Department to study God’s revelation of himself in Scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ. But the rest of the University is studying God’s revelation of himself just as much as the Theology Department. The University studies God in his creation, in his revelation to us in nature. In some subjects God is immediately apparent. In others, God is found through the work of humankind which has devised structures in history and laws that reflect the creative work of God.

The central event in the Jesuit perspective is the fact that the second person of the Trinity, the Word of God, became a human being, was born, lived and died on this earth. The Incarnation has elevated the human family to a dignity and worth far greater than it could ever manage on its own. The incredible fact of the Incarnation of God not only ennobles humankind, but also elevates the whole of created reality. The entire world is transformed by God becoming a part of it. God is not outside of his world;
he is actually, now, through the Incarnation, a part of this world.

"... for Christ
plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through
the features of
men's faces."

*From "As Kingfishers Catch Fire"
Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.*

To us the study of the world is not the study of a neutral reality. It is the study of a reality infused with the divinity, the presence of God in human history. Thus every subject is infused with God. The Jesuit can see God in every part of the University, no matter what discipline he teaches, no matter what subject he is researching. The whole of knowledge becomes sacred because it is infused and transfused with God. The Jesuit, in short, wants to be an educator because his religious identity is involved in the subjects that he teaches, no matter what they are. Most importantly, the Jesuit wants to share through his teaching the great love he has experienced of God.

In recent years, Jesuits have articulated their apostolic priority as “the service of faith
Nothing is value-free; every question and every issue has a value that must be sought and investigated if we are ever to understand things in their depths through the promotion of justice” in all their ministries including education. The primary way Jesuits hope to realize this “promotion of justice” in higher education is through a value-oriented curriculum. This emphasis on values arises from a conviction that nothing is value-free: every question and every issue has a value that must be sought and investigated if we are ever to understand things in their depths. A value orientation is not merely an ethical position on specific issues but an orientation to the whole of life that gives meaning to life and provides motivation for particular choices. The goal is not merely discrete value judgments, as important as they may be, but a system of values, or in Aristotelian terms, the virtuous life.

To solve today’s problems, Jesuits believe that learning must be integrated. Isolated, specific pieces of knowledge do not bring together the vast array of components needed to understand contemporary life. Learning
must be integrated into a unity because of the
unity of the learner. An important part of this
integration of knowledge includes reflection on
the Incarnation and presence of God as integral
parts of a comprehensive view of any issue.

Jesuits brought these ideals and spiritualify
to Creighton University in 1878. For the last 112
years we have worked here to foster the reli-
gious ideal of education in a Jesuit university.
We are proud to call Creighton a Jesuit univer-
sity.
Catholic

In our attempt to understand who we are, the final facet to be examined is that Creighton is a Catholic university.

Our Catholicity would not formerly have been viewed as a positive factor among American universities. Originally founded to provide education for immigrants and others rejected by society, Catholic universities have not always been in the mainstream of American higher education. Catholic educators were very defensive in their role of preserving and promoting the faith of their students. As late as 1939, Fr. George Bull, Dean of the Graduate School at Fordham University, made a statement that seemed to be fully accepted in Catholic universities at the time. He said that the purpose of a Catholic university was not to do research to seek new truth, but to contemplate the Truth (with a capital T) that the Catholic Church already possessed.

We have come a long way since those days fifty years ago. In the last twenty-five years our Catholic universities have moved into the mainstream of American higher education. This is certainly true of Creighton University.
Just what does our Catholicity mean today? Church leaders have come to realize that world-wide circumstances are so diverse that the definition of a Catholic university has to take into account the local environment of higher education. A Catholic university must meet all the local requirements to deserve the title of university, on a par with other institutions of higher education in that environment. In particular, in the United States the Catholic university must be marked by academic freedom — the right of a faculty member to state without fear of reprisal or threat the conclusions of scholarship developed within that faculty member's field of expertise. Academic freedom need not contradict Catholic identity.

While Creighton is not controlled by the Catholic Church under either civil or canon law, Creighton is now and traditionally has been committed to the Catholic tradition and ideal. Creighton can be said to be “Catholic in inspiration.”

Catholics see a need for Catholic universities in order to have the Christian faith present and active in the world of higher education and intellectual activity. They want to establish a dialogue between the Gospel and contemporary thought and culture. The intended outcome is a coherent world view that seeks a synthesis of learning.

A critical function of the Catholic University is to examine values that predominate in contemporary society and to judge them according to Gospel norms.

The goals of a Catholic university go beyond those of its secular counterparts. In a Catholic university teaching and research are illuminated by the light of the Christian message. Theological reflection is addressed to the whole of knowledge so that all learning is illuminated and understood in terms of Christ. Catholic universities seek to bring the Gospel into dialogue with modern culture for the benefit of both culture and Catholicism. A Catholic university strives to create a community to help all its members develop personally and spiritually and professionally. A critical function of the Catholic university is to examine the values that predominate in contemporary society and to judge them according to Gospel norms. A Catholic university promotes ecumenism and dialogue between the Christian faith and the other religions of the world, as well as nonreligious knowledge.
As a Catholic university, Creighton accepts Jesus' mission to "teach all nations." This teaching is accomplished in a Catholic university not only by a Theology Department that reflects upon God's revelation in scripture and history, but throughout the university in the reflection on God's revelation in creation, in the world, and in human events. We in a Catholic university realize that the relationship will not always be easy and smooth, but that ultimately the interaction of faith and reason brings a more complete knowledge of truth.

The diversity mentioned earlier is seen in yet another valuable manifestation. Not all of the people in a Catholic university are Catholic, nor should they be. There are people of other Christian confessions; there are people from other religions of the world; there are people with no religious beliefs. All are an integral part of the university and its life. They enhance the Catholic identity of the school, not only by their contribution to the academic disciplines, but also by providing a rich diversity of thought which contributes to the search for truth. Their presence makes possible a dialogue in the great search for truth and brings about mutual understanding and acceptance as we move towards unity and solidarity in serving the human family. Creighton University welcomes the presence of all peoples and asks of them not rigid conformity, but a recognition of and a respect for the Catholic identity of the university. This Catholic identity implies, if not an acceptance of Catholic teaching on faith and morals, at least an expectation of refraining from positive and public opposition to it.

The role of faculty in a Catholic university is three-fold; first, the search for wisdom in their respective disciplines and the communication of the results of their research to their peers and their students; second, the development of critical judgment in students and the ability to take a point of view and to hold it in dialogue with other points of view; and third, to be role models to the students demonstrating to them not only the intellectual rigor and critical judgment of true scholarship, but also the way to live in the world of faith and reason. The faculty are moral as well as intellectual role models.

Students in a Catholic university are to receive an education of the highest possible
academic rigor and excellence, while at the same time, they are developing an awareness of the values which enrich humanity with dignity and meaning. Finally, our students must be dedicated to work for the good of individuals and the building of a more just society. These students are formed not only intellectually and professionally, but also morally and spiritually.

When we focus on our identity as Catholic, we place ourselves in a centuries-long tradition of excellence and commitment stretching back 2,000 years through the great universities of Europe and the monasteries which saved Western culture from barbarian invasion, to the One who embodied in human word and deed the very Word and Deed of God. It is in this tradition that we find our distinctive identity for Creighton University — an identity characterized by our Jesuit, Catholic, and University traditions of high quality and nationally recognized excellence.

Omaha, Nebraska