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Creighton Prep is Catholic top 50 pick

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Omaha's Creighton Prep is one of America's top 50 Catholic secondary schools.

In addition to placement on the first Catholic High School Honor Roll, the boys school received special recognition for its civic education, according to the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.

"It's a nice honor that an outside group would recognize us," said John Naatz, principal of Creighton Prep.

Service projects are a part of the curriculum at Prep. Naatz said, for example, each student participates in a service retreat. This year, 10th-graders are spending a day working with the Open Door Mission, preparing and delivering lunches, as well as working inside the mission.

In addition to service, the school's average scores on several national tests, Advanced Placement program and curricula in theology and social studies were considered by the institute - to determine the school's strengths in academics, Catholic identity and civic education.

The purpose of the honor roll is "to recognize Catholic schools that demonstrate excellence in areas we think are particularly important," said Kevin Schmiesing, director of the Catholic High School Honor Roll for the Acton Institute, based in Michigan.

Schmiesing said the honor roll is unique because it considers the school's Catholicity. Other programs, including the U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools, cannot.

The Acton Institute, which developed the three surveys used and performed the rating, is an international nonprofit organization focused on integrating faith into economics and daily life. The institute plans to continue the honor roll. Schmiesing said it started with Catholic schools but could eventually expand to include other religious schools.

Each of the 1,300 Catholic high schools in the United States was invited to participate in the three surveys used for the rating. About 250 schools responded.