

# A Message from John McGreevy



January 24, 2023

## Spring semester updates and new initiatives

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Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back. I hope you had a restful holiday and are off to a good start in your courses and research activities. I write to give you a sense of the work of the Provost's Office for this upcoming semester and some of the people who will be doing that work.

### **Strategic Framework planning process**

Formidable challenges confront Notre Dame – and other universities of its type

– ranging from diminishing trust in higher education to high tuition costs to concern about universities not effectively serving as engines of cultural transformation and social mobility.

The opportunities for Notre Dame are also significant. Few universities possess such a distinct place in the higher education landscape, are so attractive to our students, and possess such a solid financial base. We have the potential to do great things at Notre Dame over the next decade and to solidify our standing as the leading global Catholic research university, on par with – but distinct from – the best private universities.

These challenges and opportunities are shaping our Strategic Framework planning process. University President Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., has asked me to coordinate the drafting of the framework, but I am fortunate to be working with a range of colleagues from every college and school and our Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Research. Last semester, the University's seven Theme Advisory Committees wrapped up their assessments of the current state of Notre Dame's efforts in the following areas: excellence in research, poverty, health/well-being, a Catholic University in service to the Church and the World, diversity/equity/inclusion, global/international, and Care for Our Common Home. University-wide committees were also convened to review our stewardship and external engagement efforts, and their reports are due in March.

In all, more than 100 faculty and staff served on these committees, lending their time and expertise to ensure that the University continues to progress in these crucial areas. They did this while continuing to excel at their day-to-day responsibilities in their classrooms, labs, and offices. My sincere gratitude to everyone involved. My gratitude, as well, to the hundreds of faculty who participated in the *Moment to See, Courage to Act* process and to the even larger number of faculty who participated in college and departmental strategic planning sessions. Planning can seem an uninspiring prospect, especially if the results do little to shape the day-to-day lives of faculty, staff, and students. But planning at Notre Dame has a history of leading to concrete achievements, and our goal over the next decade will be to use the Strategic Framework to guide us as we make decisions about where to make or reallocate investments.

We anticipate developing a broad outline of the framework this semester for consultation and advice, revising that outline over the summer, and then formally presenting the framework for consideration by the Board of Trustees and the

University community this fall. We will keep you posted as we reach milestones along the way.

### **Provost's Office team**

We welcomed some new faces to the Provost's Office team this fall and over the Christmas break.

[Joanna McNulty](#) is putting her experience and talents to work as our new associate vice president for academic finance and administration. She comes to us from the Office of Research with superb experience of how to manage large and complex budgets. She will work closely with [David Go](#), chair of the Department of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering and the Viola D. Hank Professor of Mechanical Engineering, our newly appointed vice president and associate provost for academic strategy. Although David does not officially begin in the Provost's Office until June 1, he has already assisted our team on a variety of topics. It's clear that he will be a superb catalyst for strategic initiatives for the academic core in the years ahead. David and Joanna will be assisted by Margaret Meserve, professor of history and co-director of the Glynn Family Honors Program, who became senior director of academic space, effective January 1. She will help us better understand our academic space needs and how to responsibly steward it. She has broad experience in this area within and beyond the College of Arts and Letters and is already a trusted partner of the Facilities Design and Operations team.

In addition, Chloe Leach recently joined our office as my special assistant, working closely with myself and Senior Advisor Maria Di Pasquale. Maria serves as the Provost Office's chief of staff, working on everything from long-term strategy to the puzzles of daily management. Chloe and Maria have taken the reins from two mainstays of the Provost's Office – Carmen Leichty and Jim Frabutt. Carmen now works in the President's Office, and Jim has taken on an appointment as senior assistant provost handling a wide variety of special projects. I am grateful to all of these colleagues.

As of January 1, Chris Maziar has embarked on a well-deserved leave and begun to retool for her upcoming teaching assignments in the Department of Electrical Engineering. We miss her already but have kept her phone number on speed dial as we encounter problems or difficulties. We frequently ask each other, "What would Chris think?" You may have also seen an announcement just today, congratulating Elliott Visconsi, associate provost and chief academic

digital officer, who is taking a position as provost and dean of the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, beginning July 1. We congratulate, and thank, Elliott for his superb work over many years in the Provost's Office.

Two important new appointments have been made since the end of classes. On February 1, [Keona Lewis](#) will join us from the Georgia Institute of Technology to serve as our assistant provost for academic diversity and inclusion. Keona brings to us wide experience on these vital topics and is committed to making Notre Dame an ever more inclusive, welcoming, and diverse community. On July 1, as we announced just last week, [Jeff Rhoads](#) will start as our new vice president for research. Jeff brings to Notre Dame a superb research record, experience as the founder of two technology companies, and a distinguished background in pedagogical innovation in engineering education.

We are moving forward with a search for one more senior position: vice president and associate provost for graduate studies and dean of the Graduate School. A search committee has been elected according to our University guidelines. Committee members – Jane Cleland-Huang, Luca Grillo, Rev. Greg Haake, C.S.C., Prashant Kamat, Claire Murphy, Jennifer Tank, Maura Ryan, Kristin Valentino, Tim Weninger, and myself – will begin reviewing candidate files soon. The position advertisement has been distributed widely, and we hope to have an appointment in place by July 1.

### **Building a stronger sense of community**

Notre Dame prides itself on a strong sense of community, but this pride should never shade into complacency. The pandemic weakened some of our customary ties and eliminated many occasions for gathering and celebration. I would encourage you to attend the multiple events the University, colleges, and schools sponsor as the campus comes back fully to life this year. These include Welcome Week activities, Opening Mass, the President's Address to the Faculty, Notre Dame Forum events, various Christmas receptions, service activities and, this week, Walk the Walk Week events.

We have continued funding the well-attended faculty lunches at Rohr's, with the only proviso being that you use the opportunity to eat lunch while discussing intra- or interdisciplinary collaborations with your colleagues. In addition, Rev. Robert Dowd, C.S.C., vice president and associate provost for interdisciplinary initiatives, has put together a new Connections Series to deepen our understanding of Notre Dame's interdisciplinary institutes, centers, and other

academic units. [The first event](#) will take place February 9 at 4:30 p.m. in the Jordan Hall of Science Reading Room.

We are also trying to strengthen that sense of community in other ways. This summer, we hope to develop a plan where our office will fund the purchase of academic robes for faculty members who have just been promoted to associate professor with tenure or the associate rank among TPAC, Library, and Research faculty. In return, we expect that those faculty who take advantage of this opportunity will wear them with pride at graduation and the opening and concluding Mass of the academic year.

We're also more focused on making sure our faculty are nominated for (and potentially receive) prestigious awards and election to honorary societies, such as the National Academies of Science and Engineering, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The number of faculty elected to these societies (and others) are lower than we might expect, and the Provost's Office is now advertising for a specialist to help our faculty garner the recognition they deserve. This person will report to Maura Ryan, vice president and associate provost for faculty affairs, and will work closely with the deans and department chairs.

Internally, we're looking at ways to update our approach to the way in which we pay tribute to recently tenured and promoted colleagues. For many years, these recognitions took place at an annual President's Dinner, parallel to an annual staff dinner the preceding evening. The pandemic prohibited these events, but now our office is exploring a different, slightly less formal approach to recognizing faculty promotions. More details will be available soon, but I am delighted to announce it will include the possibility of a photo of faculty honorees on the video board in the football stadium.

All of these efforts are intended to bring us closer together as an academic community so that we can support each other and the University. If you have additional suggestions to further strengthen our culture, please let me know.

My thanks for your patience in reading a long note. My thanks, even more, for all that you do for Notre Dame.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John T. M'Onery". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John T. McGreevy  
Charles and Jill Fischer Provost  
Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History

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