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Dear Colleagues,

The recent Faculty Experience Survey gathered your thoughts and evaluations on a wide variety of topics. Last year each dean held discussions with her or his college/school faculty on the Faculty Experience Survey and the Blue Ribbon Committee report on the findings from the Survey. Today I write to you about one survey topic in particular: faculty governance.

I want to emphasize at the beginning that it matters a great deal to me that together we achieve rich and meaningful opportunities for faculty inclusion in our various decision-making processes. The active engagement of the faculty is central to the successful governance of any university, but for a great university truly to flourish, the responsibilities of leadership must be shared and executed in a collaborative fashion.

Gratifyingly, the data gathered through the Faculty Experience Survey were largely positive, but the Blue Ribbon Committee report noted that “lack of faculty inclusion in University decision-making” ranks among the areas of comparatively “low satisfaction” for our faculty. I am writing to you today to enlist your help in addressing this critical issue.

But first, some background. To begin to address this faculty concern, I approached the Academic Council’s Executive Committee during the past academic year and requested that the Council take up the issue of how best to promote and sustain effective faculty governance at Notre Dame. The Executive Committee deliberated on the issue and then tasked the Faculty Affairs Committee with establishing an ad hoc committee on the topic, using a process that is “transparent, fair, and inclusive, and driven by faculty input.” At its final meeting last spring, the Faculty Affairs Committee, led by its chair Professor Michael Desch, presented a proposal for creating the committee to the entire Academic Council, which unanimously approved the proposal (minutes from the meeting can be found at <http://provost.nd.edu/committees/academic-council/minutes/>).

The Council’s charge to the Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Governance, as approved by the Academic Council, is to survey systematically faculty opinion on the state of faculty governance at Notre Dame; outline and clarify current mechanisms of faculty governance; establish criteria to determine those issues that fall under the purview of faculty governance; ascertain whether there are

any areas of disagreement between senior administrators and faculty members on the role of the faculty governance; and, based upon all its findings, offer recommendations for enhancing faculty governance. The focus of the committee will be on faculty governance at the central university level rather than at the college or department level.

This fall, in accord with the proposal approved by the Academic Council, you will be asked to elect representatives to the ad hoc committee, which will include one representative from each college and school, Hesburgh Libraries, special professional faculty, and research faculty. The processes for electing representatives will be presented to you soon and will follow the normal processes within each of these units or faculty groupings for electing representatives to committees. I encourage you to take this election seriously and participate in it, and then to engage actively with the committee as it undertakes its important charge.

It is important to note that this committee is not the only means available for considering faculty governance. The Faculty Senate is discussing this issue as well, and discussions of faculty governance at college/school and department levels should also be topics of conversation during the upcoming academic year.

I look forward to working with all of you to strengthen faculty governance at Notre Dame. I understand that true faculty governance implies an investment of your time, and I thank you in advance for that ongoing gift you make to the University.

Best wishes for a productive and enjoyable fall semester.

Yours in Notre Dame,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas G. Burish