September 22, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

The Board of Trustees Finance Committee recently met for an initial, broad discussion of the 2011-2012 University budget. At that meeting, among other topics, the University stressed the importance of continuing the momentum of the past few years in critical areas such as undergraduate financial aid, graduate student stipends and health insurance, library acquisitions, faculty hiring, faculty salaries, and research support. The trustees were pleased with and highly supportive of our progress in these areas. They are also concerned about the nation’s (and world’s) economy and the unlikely prospect of major improvement in the year ahead. While the University will do all it can to find new monies, and the trustees will do all they can to support the University’s academic priorities, it is also very likely that, as Fr. Jenkins noted in his annual address to the faculty, our appetite for continued progress in these or similar areas will depend on a large extent on our willingness to re-purpose funds from lower to higher priorities.

The purpose of this letter is to discuss, within this general fiscal situation that we find ourselves, one critical area of support which has been a focus in recent years, namely support of the research, scholarship, and creative endeavors of the faculty, which I will refer to throughout this letter as research, and to describe new and continued centrally administered programs to support and enhance those research activities across campus.

To date, our approach to increasing the support for research has been multi-faceted. In addition to increased support provided by the deans through their various college and school programs, efforts to bolster campus research have included creating the new Office of the Vice President for Research (VPR), developing the funds necessary to support competitive start-up funding for new faculty, providing bridge funding for new faculty positions, emphasizing academic and research priorities in the capital campaign, increased funding for the library, establishment of the Center for Research Computing, and investing in faculty research teams...
through a competitive process overseen by the Strategic Academic Planning Committee (SAPC). We hope that the University will continue to be able to make, when the University’s financial situation allows, other large investments in faculty research undertakings. However, in order to continue our current positive trajectory, we recognize that in the immediate future we must provide modest but ongoing support for current programs and, to some degree, also for new ones, both those that are disciplinary and interdisciplinary, and those that have little chance of attracting external support and those that should be expected to compete for external support.

To that end, through the Office of the Vice President for Research, we have done a reexamination of our centrally administered research support programs and an assessment of new research support programs that may be needed. This analysis was informed by consultation with faculty and deans by our VPR, Bob Bernhard. The programs administered through Bob’s office are not meant to supplant the research support programs already available through the colleges and schools, but rather to provide support not available through them. Below is a listing of the ongoing research support programs that will be funded through Bob’s office. Funding will come largely from the reallocation of monies within the Provost’s and VPR’s offices.

1. **Library Acquisitions Program.** This program, which was initiated last year, will provide modest funding for library acquisitions for research purposes that are not available through other channels.

2. **The Faculty Research Support Program.** This revamped program will provide grants to individual faculty members or groups of faculty for a broad range of research projects including pilot studies or the initiation of a new program of research as well as larger projects designed to make a major contribution to their field. Grants may range in size up to a maximum of $100,000 over 3 years.

3. **Equipment Restoration and Renewal Program.** This ongoing program will continue to provide funding to help restore or replace the equipment needed for faculty research, scholarship, and other creative endeavors across all disciplines.

4. **Rapid Response Grant Program.** Occasionally an opportunity arises which, if responded to rapidly, provides a rare occasion for initiating a major research project or scholarly study. This new program is designed to provide a rapid turn-around response to requests for support for such unanticipated but important and urgent opportunities for research.

5. **Bridge Funding.** This program, which has been developed in coordination with the colleges, is used to keep research teams intact during interruptions in external funding.

In the weeks ahead, Bob will be completing his faculty consultation process, finalizing descriptions of the programs and application guidelines, and creating processes for making funding decisions in each category, after which he will formally announce each program. He welcomes suggestions from individuals, groups, or departments as part of this process.
The significant progress that has been made in research and scholarship in recent years is due to the hard work, creative energies, and focused commitment of the faculty. No university can ultimately be better than its faculty. Hence, the excellence of our University largely derives from these efforts and the many others you make in your teaching and service. The University must, and will, do all it can to continue to support you in all of these endeavors.

Thank you for all you do for Notre Dame. Best wishes for a productive and fulfilling semester.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas G. Burish

cc: Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.