



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

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August 25, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome. I hope the academic year is off to a smooth start and that you were energized by the research and course planning you were able to conduct over the summer. I also hope you enjoyed an invigorating (and well deserved) break.

Now we begin again. I am delighted to be working with you this year as the Charles and Jill Fischer Provost. Without exception, everyone I have met since the announcement of my appointment has been welcoming, and I know I will count on that support in the months and years ahead. I am grateful to Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., and the Board of Trustees for their confidence in me. I especially wish to thank Chris Maziar, my immediate predecessor, for her generosity of spirit in taking on the interim provost role last January and her willingness to answer my many questions. Chris's extraordinary service – over not just the past year but many years of stellar service in the Provost's Office – have put all of us in her debt.

Notre Dame's aspiration is to be the world's best Catholic research university, on par with this country's best private research universities. The clarity of that vision is unusual. My goal as provost is to work with you to make that vision more real, to the benefit of a country, church, and globe in need.

My primary emphasis in this first year as provost will be on strategic planning. (For more information and updates on the strategic planning process, [click here to access the University Strategic Framework website](#).)

Some great universities do strategic planning well. Others less so.<sup>1</sup>

Notre Dame's opportunity – our opportunity – is to use this process to move forward faster than we otherwise might. The challenge is simple: Can we marshal programs, faculty, staff leaders, and funding into meaningful projects that dramatically enhance our teaching and research? Or bluntly: What are the big ideas that will transform Notre Dame for the better over the next generation?

Our advantages are many, but our challenges are also real. We do not have as many top-ranked programs, and especially top-ranked graduate programs with superb placements, as we need. Our external funding record has improved dramatically, but needs to adapt to new funding sources and opportunities. Our efforts on a variety of fronts – from thematic research areas, to overlapping courses

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Kirby, *Empires of Ideas: Creating the Modern University from Germany to America to China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022), 112-235.

in different colleges and schools, to our global presence – would benefit from focus and integration. Our undergraduate students are superb but more of them could be pushed to excel through such mechanisms as undergraduate research, enhancing quantitative skills, rigorous study abroad programs, and second language mastery.

In strategic planning for the academic core, we will build on three foundations. The first are strategic plans for the colleges and schools, some of which have been completed and some of which are ongoing. We've never had a more talented or committed group of deans and academic leaders, and their advice and vision will be indispensable for our success. The second will be the seven [Theme Advisory Committees](#) chartered last spring to develop proposals on how we might advance Notre Dame's research and teaching mission. I commend those of you serving on the Theme Advisory Committees and those individuals who have offered suggestions for them. The third will be the interdisciplinary projects begun through the [Moment to See, Courage to Act \(MSCA\) initiative](#), which will be folded into the work of the Theme Advisory Committees and colleges and schools. I studied all of the MSCA proposals this summer and am grateful to my predecessor, Provost Marie Lynn Miranda, for jumpstarting faculty creativity in this way and to the many faculty who participated in the process. I'm also appreciative of the work of Rev. Robert Dowd, C.S.C., vice president and associate provost for interdisciplinary initiatives. He is coordinating those projects in their current iteration and advising them on possible integration into the strategic planning process and funding opportunities.

I will also be focused this year on deepening our effort to build a more inclusive community. The imperative to become more diverse should be felt even more keenly at Notre Dame, as Catholicism can lay claim to being the world's most multicultural and multilingual institution. Becoming a more inclusive community means becoming more mission driven, not less.

Our University trustees drafted a [report on diversity, equity, and inclusion at Notre Dame](#) last year that will serve as a touchstone of our efforts. I will touch on just one element of that report here. Our undergraduate student body is rapidly and happily becoming more diverse. Our new Vice President for Undergraduate Enrollment Micki Kidder just announced the numbers for this year's incoming class, and we should all be pleased that the University is enrolling record numbers of first-generation college students and Pell-eligible students, as well as record numbers of African-American and Latino/a students. Admitting a diverse student body, however, is quite different from ensuring that this more diverse student body thrives. In order to highlight the academic core of the University, the division of Undergraduate Affairs has changed its name to Undergraduate Education. Led by Vice President and Associate Provost Rev. Daniel Groody, C.S.C., and his team, this unit will work in close collaboration with the deans and colleges as well as Student Affairs. They will work to ensure the strongest possible educational outcomes and experience for all students. They build upon the superb work of Rev. Hugh Page, who initially provided oversight for our Transformational Leaders Program and Notre Dame Scholars and who is now the inaugural vice president for institutional transformation and advisor to Fr. Jenkins.

Leadership transitions are part of the annual cycle in any large academic institution. This year we hope to hire within the Provost's Office a director of academic diversity and inclusion. We will also soon begin a search for the dean of the Graduate School. All of us should be grateful to Tom Fuja, professor of electrical engineering, for his willingness to step in as interim dean, and this after two years of prior service as interim dean of the College of Engineering. I know he will excel in this role. This year, too, I am grateful to have Kelley Rich as interim vice president of the IDEA Center, where she is already making a major contribution.

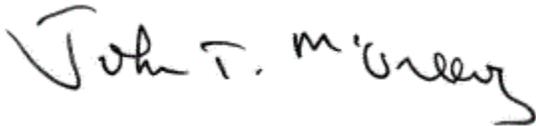
I will highlight one other search at a bit more length. As announced last year, Vice President for Research Bob Bernhard will be stepping down. Bob's accomplishments over 15 years are remarkable. He would be the first to give fundamental credit where credit is due, to our faculty. But it is also clear that our achievements depended upon Bob. He played a significant role in increasing our research funding from \$83 million in fiscal year 2007 to \$244 million in fiscal year 2022, establishing an infrastructure for the Office of Research, and ensuring that we are vigilant on ever more complex matters of safety and compliance. The work of the Vice President for Research Search Committee was paused last spring; however, the committee has reconvened and is working toward its charge of identifying a diverse pool of candidates. I am grateful to the members of the committee and to Bob for his willingness to remain in the vice president role this semester.

I am looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible this year. To that end, I am arranging meetings with department chairs, departments, and programs and look forward to those occasions. I will also be holding open office hours for any faculty member, staff member, and student at the University. [Visit this webpage for the open office hours fall schedule.](#)

Please also don't hesitate to speak up or engage me in conversation at other meetings and gatherings throughout the year, or even if we cross paths walking across campus. We will all need to lend our voices and talents to help the University succeed.

My best wishes to you for the fall semester. And thank you, again, for all that you do for our University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John T. McGreevy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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