

# May 2024 Strategic Framework update



May 24, 2024

Dear colleagues,

Having concluded the academic year, we write to share with you our efforts to implement [Notre Dame 2033: A Strategic Framework](#) and advance Notre Dame as the leading global Catholic research university, on par with but distinct from the world's best private research universities. It's been inspiring to see such a high level of enthusiasm and alignment across campus and we have a number of updates to report. Colleges, schools, and divisions also continue to make progress on [their own strategic plans](#), and together these documents provide a clear and comprehensive vision of Notre Dame's future.

## Engaging campus

Well beyond the initial launch, we have seen extraordinary faculty and staff engagement in the broad ideas articulated in the framework as well as in the new University-wide strategic initiatives. Website traffic remains high, the framework has been downloaded nearly 7,000 times, and we just posted a [Spanish translation of the document](#), in part because of requests from partners and colleagues in Latin America.



The spring Connections series featuring sessions on Poverty, Ethics, and Democracy drew about 125 attendees per session, more than double the attendance from last year's Connections series. We will continue that series next fall starting with Bioengineering & Life Sciences. The new [University-wide Strategic Framework Grants Program](#) also drew a tremendous response, with 58 research and teaching proposals from more than 75 faculty representing more than 40 different departments, centers, and institutes across all seven colleges and schools. The initial group of grant recipients will be announced in the coming weeks.

# Progress on Priorities

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The progress we've been able to make in this first year demonstrates the potential of thinking as an institution to advance further and faster than before. This is particularly evident in the way the deans have collaborated on University-wide initiatives that cross multiple colleges, schools, and divisions.



## Democracy

The Democracy Initiative, formally launched in April, recently wrapped up the Rooney Center's Keeping the Republic Conference and welcomed scholars from around the world to the Kellogg Institute's Global Democracy Conference this week. New Managing Director Joel Day begins his role on June 1. He is a scholar-practitioner who brings more than 20 years of leadership experience in government, nonprofits, and political campaigns along with academic appointments at Princeton University, the University of Southern California, and the University of California, San Diego. Keep up with the Democracy Initiative at [go.nd.edu/democracy](http://go.nd.edu/democracy).

## Ethics

This summer, the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study will become the new Notre Dame Institute for Ethics and the Common Good. Ethics Initiative Director Meghan Sullivan will lead the institute, which will be an essential part of the initiative and will house the new Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., Center for Virtue Ethics, the Notre Dame-IBM Technology Ethics Lab, and the Signature Course Fellowship Program, which is supported by a major John Templeton Foundation grant. Learn more about the Ethics Initiative at [go.nd.edu/ethics](http://go.nd.edu/ethics).

## Health and Well-Being

### Bioengineering & Life Sciences

In February, Paul Bohn, the Arthur J. Schmitt Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering and Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, was named inaugural director of the new Bioengineering & Life Sciences Initiative, a joint effort of the Colleges of Science and Engineering. The initiative established a policy and guidance committee with representatives from 14 colleges, departments, centers, and institutes; formed a faculty research strategy committee; held three faculty information sessions this spring that drew more than 100 participants; and organized a day-long planning retreat earlier this month.

The initiative will be housed in the [second McCourtney building](#) in the East Campus Research Complex when it opens in winter 2025. Learn more at [go.nd.edu/BELS](https://go.nd.edu/BELS).

## Mental Health

In February, the University announced a [historic commitment to fighting the national mental health crisis](#), including the new [Veldman Family Psychology Clinic](#) that will break ground this summer in South Bend. So far, more than \$68 million has been committed to expand access to care on campus and in our region, advance cutting-edge research in psychology and neuroscience, and produce scalable, evidence-based interventions in childhood trauma, suicide prevention, and substance abuse. The initiative will enhance mental health services for Notre Dame students through a unique partnership between academic and student affairs units and expanded resources, including additional care and wellness consultants trained to meet the mental health care needs of students at an earlier stage. Follow the progress at [go.nd.edu/mentalhealth](https://go.nd.edu/mentalhealth).

## Humanities and the Arts

To encourage interdisciplinary research in the humanities, the College of Arts and Letters has selected its [inaugural group of Research Innovation Labs](#). This includes two cross-disciplinary Humanities Research Labs as well as three Strategic Theme Labs focusing on aspects of democracy and AI ethics.

The new Raclin Murphy Museum of Art attracted nearly 29,000 visitors this semester, including more than 6,000 students and more than 800 faculty and staff members. Building on the excitement of the museum opening and the launch of [arts@ND](#), a group of [arts leaders from across campus](#) is planning for an arts festival that would engage the arts, the community, students, faculty, and staff around a common theme connected to the University's mission.

## Poverty

In January, the University [formally launched the Poverty Initiative](#), supported by an alumni couple's lead gift of \$100 million—the largest single donation to an academic priority in the University's history. This spring, the Poverty Initiative made initial investments in several key projects and put out a [call for Poverty Research Package proposals](#) that drew nearly 30 applications from faculty representing 16 different departments across campus. Recipients will be announced later this summer. Read a more detailed update at [go.nd.edu/poverty](https://go.nd.edu/poverty).

## South Bend and the Region

We continue to [deepen our partnerships within South Bend and the greater region](#). In April, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation [announced that the South Bend–Elkhart region will receive \\$45 million](#) through the READI 2.0 grant for “quality of place” improvements, including in the downtown South Bend area, [where Notre Dame's](#)

presence has expanded. Our growth coincides with the city's efforts to develop a master plan for downtown South Bend, which began in February and has included Notre Dame and other significant regional stakeholders.

Construction began last month on a pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly urban trail connecting downtown South Bend and Notre Dame; the project is scheduled to be completed by mid-October. Along the trail, the University donated three plots of land on Turnock Street to the Northeast Neighborhood Revitalization Organization, which will build affordable single-family homes in the first community land trust of its kind in Indiana. The trail also passes the Veldman Family Psychology Clinic at the corner of South Bend Avenue and Hill Street.

## Sustainability

Deans and faculty leaders continue to explore potential directions for Notre Dame to engage in an even more ambitious program of research and education in sustainability and environmental issues. We anticipate more announcements in the fall semester.

Meanwhile, significant progress continues on sustainability efforts here on campus. The University's pledge to reduce its carbon footprint by 65 percent by 2030 and entirely by 2050 requires an arsenal of green energy solutions. The hydroelectric facility along the St. Joseph River in downtown South Bend generated more than 5,000 megawatt hours of electricity during 2023, equivalent to the annual energy consumption of nearly 500 average American homes. Construction on the West Campus Solar Field along State Road 933 will begin in the fall.

The Southeast Geothermal project, which includes the geothermal well fields south of the McCourtney research buildings and under the parking lots between the Joyce Center and Compton Family Ice Arena, will connect to a new geothermal plant on the north face of the Joyce Center. At that project's completion, slated for late 2025, nearly 2,400 geothermal wells will feed into three plants across campus.

The combination of these academic and operational efforts led to the University being recognized as a Top 250 university in the world in sustainability by QS, a leading higher-ed rating organization.

## Undergraduate Education

We are moving forward on several of the undergraduate education projects outlined in the framework.

## Student Affairs and Residential Life



The Division of Student Affairs, led by Vice President Rev. Gerry Olinger, C.S.C., has hired Doug Thompson as [the inaugural executive director of diversity and engagement](#). In this role, he will lead the division's efforts in the areas of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in the context of the University's Catholic mission and oversee a number of areas, including the new [Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#), which opened this fall.

On-campus residential life is core to the distinctive undergraduate experience at Notre Dame. To help the University provide on-campus housing to all undergraduates, including transfer students, we will soon break ground on [two new undergraduate halls](#) on the south side of campus. The new halls are scheduled to open in fall 2026.

## **Moreau Pilot**

The [re-conception of the Moreau program](#), led by inaugural faculty director William Mattison, is moving ahead with a pilot that will be taught this fall to approximately 380 first-year students by a group of instructors largely from the committee that designed the new version of the course. They will be assisted by 19 upperclass students through a new Moreau Peer Leader program. The pilot will also include a set of co-curricular activities to complement the learning objectives of the course.

## **Foundational Course Transformation Academy**

Notre Dame Learning, under the leadership of Vice President and Associate Provost Ron Metoyer, has launched its Foundational Course Transformation Academy, which uses data analytics, cutting-edge pedagogical techniques, and other tools to significantly enhance student learning across multiple sections of a course that touches hundreds of students. The team is currently partnering with physics faculty to improve and assess Physics I, in which 450 students enroll each year. The team anticipates piloting the new course design and materials in fall 2025. In fall 2024, the program will partner with math faculty to begin a redesign of the Calculus I/II sequence.

## **Supporting Students**

The [Office of Undergraduate Education](#), led by Vice President and Associate Provost Rev. Dan Groody, C.S.C., continues to assess and advance efforts to meet the needs of our students, with a particular emphasis on the over 20 percent of our undergraduates who are eligible for Pell grants or are first-generation college students. The office is both participating in and tracking the progress of 26 projects involving a number of units across campus, from the Enrollment Division to ND Learning to the colleges and schools and Institutional Research, Innovation, and Strategy. This summer, some of these students will attend one of two Summer Academies at Notre Dame: one is a pre-matriculation opportunity that will help first-year students transition to campus, and the other is a program for rising second-year engineers, which will enable them to complete their curriculum within four years.

# Investing in people

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Our most important asset is our people, and we must ensure that an even more excellent and diverse community of students, staff, and faculty thrives at Notre Dame. This goal includes a number of initiatives called out in the framework, from financial aid to faculty and staff recruitment and retention to the vital work coordinated by Rev. Canon Hugh Page and the [Office of Institutional Transformation](#).



Our continued investments in our people have not gone unnoticed; this spring, [Forbes listed Notre Dame](#) as the top educational institution on its list of America's Best Large Employers.

As one of the first major investments supporting graduate education, the University will fund substantial and sustained raises in Ph.D. stipend levels for the Colleges of Arts and Letters, Engineering, and Science, and the Keough School. These investments, shepherded by Michael Hildreth, dean of the Graduate School, in collaboration with Deans Scott Appleby, Patricia Culligan, Sarah Mustillo, and Santiago Schnell, are among the most consequential in support of Ph.D. training in Notre Dame's history. They will enable us to better compete for some of the world's most talented Ph.D. students. This news follows [last fall's announcement](#) of Notre Dame becoming one of the relatively few research universities to offer health care benefits for the spouses and children of qualifying graduate students.

This spring, the Office of the Provost, Notre Dame Research, and the Graduate School, in partnership with all of the colleges and schools, hosted the inaugural [Our Futures Weekend](#). The event was an opportunity to recruit and build authentic relationships with prospective faculty and graduate student candidates from groups historically underrepresented in the academy. The program received more than 180 applications from prospective graduate students and 46 were chosen to attend, joining 10 recent Ph.D. recipients considering future faculty opportunities. Participant feedback was exceedingly positive and we plan to repeat the event.

## Looking ahead

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Looking ahead, we will continue our efforts to implement the strategic framework—advancing the next group of University-wide strategic initiatives as well as the many other

priorities it identifies. Vice President and Associate Provost David Go and others are working closely with Institutional Research, Innovation, and Strategy to finalize metrics for the 50 specific items named in the framework and to track our progress.



In partnership with the newly renamed Notre Dame Global, we continue to develop a

comprehensive global strategy informed by the global theme advisory committee report, the college and school plans, and the strategic framework. The University's global network of locations has expanded to 12 locations—including the newest site: Notre Dame Nairobi—reflecting the importance of deepening our engagement with the Global South. We will soon begin discussions about a strategic research initiative in Global Catholicism.

Since December, a cross-disciplinary task force led by Dean Sarah Mustillo has been developing a plan for data and computational science research and data and digital literacy education at Notre Dame. That group will issue a report at the end of the summer.

## Final Thoughts

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We're lucky to be in the position we are as we look to the next decade and that is in large part due to the vision of outgoing President Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C. The goals laid out in the strategic framework were almost unthinkable back in 2005 at the moment of his inauguration, but are now within reach because of Fr. John's leadership. We are thrilled to welcome Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C., as his successor and as someone who will lead us to even greater achievements.

More needs to be done and we realize how much vital, ongoing work does not fall under the categories listed above. Still, working together we have made significant progress on the goals enunciated in the framework in this first academic year, and we look forward to working with all of you to help Notre Dame achieve its highest potential in the coming decade.

Sincerely,

John T. McGreevy  
Charles and Jill Fischer Provost

Shannon Cullinan  
Executive Vice President

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