

Strategic Framework Update: Fall 2024

December 19, 2024

Dear Colleagues

We write to update you on our efforts to implement [Notre Dame 2033: A Strategic Framework](#) and position Notre Dame as the leading global Catholic research university, on par with but distinct from the world's best private research universities.

As you know, this work complements and supports efforts to realize our [University goals](#), as well as the goals articulated in the [college, school, and divisional plans](#).

Our efforts to think as an institution reflect the call of our new President, [Fr. Robert Dowd, C.S.C.](#), for us to be bridge builders: "First, we must create more pathways to and from Notre Dame," he said in his inaugural address. "Second, we must connect and collaborate more deeply as a community of learning. And, finally, we must deepen and expand our engagement in and with the world."

Investing in People

Our most important asset is our people, and ensuring that an ever more excellent and diverse community of students, staff, and faculty thrives at Notre Dame is a University-wide priority.

In September, Fr. Dowd announced Pathways to Notre Dame, [a historic expansion of the University's affordability and accessibility initiatives](#). Notre Dame is now one of a handful of universities in the United States to be need-blind for all students, both domestic and international. Pathways to Notre Dame also includes a new no-loan policy for undergraduate students, enhancing the ability of our middle- and low-income families to attend the University.



The Pathways announcement builds on purposeful efforts to expand access to a Notre Dame education, including the decision to go need-blind for domestic students in the late 1990s and ongoing dedication to enrolling an undergraduate student body that is at least 20% first-generation college and Pell-eligible. As a result, the University's financial aid commitment has increased by 45% over the past five years alone, and 22.5% of the fall 2024 incoming class are Pell-eligible and first-generation students.

This fall also ushered in substantial increases in Ph.D. stipend levels for the Colleges of [Arts and Letters](#), [Engineering](#), and [Science](#), and the [Keough School for Global Affairs](#). These investments are among the most consequential in support of Ph.D. training in Notre Dame's history and will enable us to better compete for some of the world's most talented Ph.D. students. This news follows [last winter's announcement](#) that Notre Dame would become one of the few research universities to offer healthcare benefits for the spouses and children of qualifying graduate students.

The University is also [hiring faculty](#) to advance scholarly and educational programs across the priorities identified in the framework, including a Science/Arts & Letters cluster hire in neuroscience as part of the health and well-being priority, an Arts & Letters/Keough School cluster hire in migration connected to the Poverty Initiative, and senior-level searches in poverty, democracy, and normative ethics.

In addition to the important part they play in all forms of academic programming, staff are critical contributors to our efforts to think as an institution. They have modeled cross-campus collaboration and developed successful communities of practice, including [Faculty Administration Support & Training](#) (FAST) and [several efforts in the Office of Information Technology](#).



In October, [the inaugural Shamrock Summit](#) brought together nearly 200 finance professionals from a range of departments and academic units for two days of networking, learning from one another, sharing best practices, and planning for the future.

Strategic Initiatives

Arts

The Arts Initiative officially launched in August with [the appointment of its director](#), Michael Schreffler, a professor of art history and associate dean for the arts in the College of Arts & Letters. Managing Director [Rebecca Struch](#) joined the leadership team in October. With three key areas of research focus now identified, the initiative is soliciting faculty and student participation in its efforts and preparing to announce the theme for the inaugural Notre Dame Arts Biennial, which will take place in the spring 2027 semester. Learn more at go.nd.edu/arts.

Democracy

After a University-wide call for proposals, the initiative [awarded Democracy Catalyst Grants to 40 research, education, and convening projects](#) led by 70 scholars representing colleges, schools, centers, and institutes across campus. We have also launched [a faculty search](#) for senior scholars who specialize in the empirical study of democracy. The Democracy Initiative continues to strengthen the formation of the next generation of public servants with the [Democracy Talks](#) series and undergraduate [Democracy Fellows](#). Learn more at go.nd.edu/democracy.

Ethics

The Ethics Initiative [launched the Institute for Ethics and the Common Good](#) (ECG), a transformation and expansion of the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study. In November, the Notre Dame-IBM Technology Ethics Lab—a key component of ECG—[hosted a conference on the importance of responsible AI in finance](#), convening senior-level executives in the finance industry, tech experts, and cutting-edge researchers. The institute also won a \$539,000 planning grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to support [Faith-Based Frameworks for AI Ethics](#). Learn more at go.nd.edu/ethics.

Health and Well-Being

Since its inception in February, the Bioengineering & Life Sciences Initiative (BELS) has made considerable progress toward advancing multidisciplinary research on campus. [Three significant internal funding opportunities](#) were announced this fall—for collaborative faculty teams, postdoctoral researchers, and campus-wide partnerships—and these generated wide-ranging responses from 56 faculty members and 21 postdoctoral researchers representing 11 unique departments on campus. Grant recipients will be announced in early 2025. BELS also completed a faculty-led survey of needed biomedical research capabilities and initiated the search for the initiative's next director. For more details, visit go.nd.edu/BELS.



In September, the University broke ground on the new [Veldman Family Psychology Clinic](#) in South Bend. When the 35,000-square-foot facility opens in 2026, it will unite existing work at the William J. Shaw Center for Children and Families with new research on substance use and other developing areas.

Professor [Kristin Valentino](#) has been named inaugural director of the clinic, effective Jan. 1. Learn more at go.nd.edu/MentalHealthInitiative.

Poverty

Continuing to advance innovative “local to global” research to alleviate poverty, the Poverty Initiative announced its first campus-wide [Poverty Research Package](#) grants this fall, awarding multi-year grants to faculty from the Keough School, College of Science, and College of Engineering, and helping to seed [Notre Dame Population Analytics](#) (NDPop). The initiative also developed a Poverty Research Fellows program for undergraduates and hosted a [summit on the opioids settlement](#), bringing together more than 100 policymakers, foundation leaders, and public health experts from across the country to develop strategies to ensure the nearly \$50 billion in opioid settlement funds benefit those most affected by the opioid epidemic. Learn more about the initiative’s work at go.nd.edu/poverty.

Sustainability

The Just Transformations to Sustainability Initiative is launching this winter, [led by Professor Arun Agrawal](#), a renowned scholar of environmental politics and sustainable development. He officially joins the University on Jan. 1 as the inaugural director of the initiative, which will coordinate and amplify sustainability research, education, and engagement efforts across campus, develop an agenda for leading-edge research, and train a new generation of sustainability champions dedicated to enabling the flourishing of people and nature for a common future. Follow the progress at go.nd.edu/sustainability.

Operationally, the University has continued to advance its sustainability goals.

Due to efforts over the past decade, Notre Dame’s carbon emissions have declined by nearly 50% since 2005, and [the University was recently recognized](#) by both the Princeton Review and QS Sustainability rankings as a national and global leader in sustainability among institutions of higher education.



This summer, the campus' fourth and largest geothermal wellfield was installed under the Compton parking lot, and the campus' [seventh green roof was installed](#) at the Rockne Memorial building. The [West Campus Solar Field](#) remains on schedule to be completed by Spring 2025.

Undergraduate Education

Moreau First-Year Seminar

This fall, the Moreau Program offered a pilot version of [the new First-Year Seminar](#) to 20% of students in preparation for a full rollout in fall 2025. The new program featured strong faculty involvement, a robust curriculum, outstanding co-curricular events, and high-impact practices such as a peer leader program and a "Commonplace Book" for each student with perennial readings and students' own reflections on them. We are conducting an intensive review of the pilot course, and initial indicators are that it has been well-received.

Foundational Course Transformation Academy

Notre Dame Learning is now collaborating with two departments through its [Foundational Course Transformation Academy](#) (FCTA). The three-year process uses data analytics, cutting-edge pedagogical techniques, and other tools to significantly enhance student learning across multiple sections of courses that enroll hundreds of students. Faculty from the Department of Mathematics kicked off a redesign of Calculus with the FCTA team this fall, while physics faculty continued their work on Physics I & II for engineers.

Summer Academies at Notre Dame (SAND)

Through its Transformational Leaders Program, the [Office of Undergraduate Education](#) hosted 49 incoming first-year students in the SAND I program this summer. These students came from high schools with limited AP coursework and few college-bound peers. Participants had the opportunity to explore college life, discern their academic paths, and earn college credit before the fall semester. Additionally, we piloted the SAND II program, which is in the summer following the first year and enables engineering students to continue their calculus sequence in order to progress successfully in their major.

Peer-Led Chemistry Huddles

This fall, the Office of Undergraduate Education's Learning Resource Center, in partnership with ND Learning and the College of Science, piloted a new learning support program: [Chemistry Huddles](#). These small, peer-facilitated study groups were led by fellow undergraduates who had previously excelled in the course and had a particular enthusiasm for helping other students. Early indicators point to improved academic performance

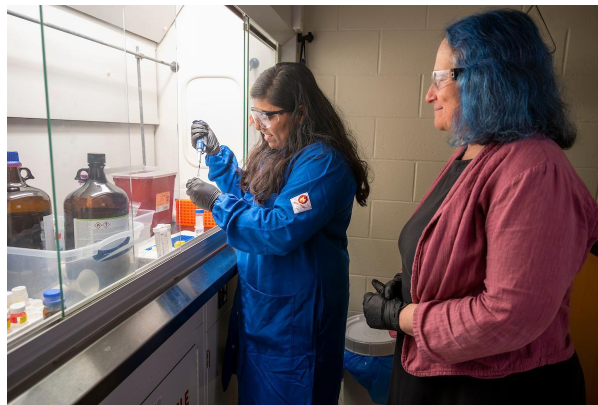
and feelings of belonging among participants. If successful, we will broaden this strategy to include other courses.

Residential Life

At Notre Dame, the experience of living in the residence halls is a key component of undergraduate education. To make it possible to provide on-campus housing to all undergraduates, including transfer students, the University [opened Graham Family Hall](#) in August and is now building two new undergraduate halls on the south side of campus: [Therese Mary Grojean Hall](#), a 275-bed women's residence hall, will replace Pangborn Hall and [Coyle Hall](#), a 258-bed men's residence hall, will replace Fischer Hall. They are both expected to open in fall 2026. [Follow the construction live](#).

Research Highlights

We continue to make progress toward our research goals. During the 2024 fiscal year, ND researchers submitted 1,310 proposals for external research funding for a total amount of \$1.016 billion—[the first time the University has surpassed the billion-dollar mark for proposals](#).



In addition, the University received 829 separate awards—the largest number on record. With \$223 million in total funding, these awards propelled the University past the \$200 million mark for the fourth straight year. The recently released Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) Survey data show that ND is on track to double its research expenditures during the last decade, with expenditures of nearly \$332 million in fiscal year 2023.

In an exciting new development, the Institute for Educational Initiatives [announced a new Center for Educational Research and Action](#) (ERA), which will organize, accelerate, and amplify Notre Dame's education research and programming efforts. [Professor Nicole McNeil](#) will serve as the inaugural director. Through professorships, research training programs at the postbaccalaureate and postdoctoral levels, and research seed funding, ERA will support groundbreaking research with demonstrable application for improving schools and student learning and more fully integrate all education research and application across units.

McCourtney Hall, the interdisciplinary research building on the east side of campus, will double in size with the [opening of a second building in February](#). Underwritten by a lead gift from alumnus and Emeritus Trustee Ted H. McCourtney and his wife, Tracy, this second structure in the East Campus Research Complex will

connect to the original three-story McCourtney Hall and facilitate the growth of interdisciplinary research at the University, with a core focus on the future of health at the crossroads of science and engineering.

South Bend & the Region

Several encouraging developments occurred this semester as we continued to build bridges to the community and deepen our engagement in the local region.

- In August, the University received a [\\$30 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.](#), which will support a downtown talent and technology district anchored by the former Tribune building.
- In September, more than 750 faculty and staff participated in the [Inauguration Build](#) through the St. Joseph County chapter of Habitat for Humanity, building five houses for local families in celebration of Fr. Dowd's Inauguration. The houses were designed by Notre Dame architecture students.
- [The Link Trail opened last month](#), establishing a physical connection between our campus and downtown South Bend. The 1.5-mile pathway includes improved lanes for walking and biking and is well-lit for increased safety.

For more information about Notre Dame's engagement with the region, from the School of Architecture's [Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative](#) to the latest [Regional Economic Impact Report](#), visit publicaffairs.nd.edu.

Global Engagement

The percentage of Notre Dame students studying abroad [has reached an all-time high](#). For the 2022–23 academic year, our undergraduate study abroad participation increased by more than 10 percent from the previous year—from 77% to 87.5%.



With externally funded faculty research projects in 67 countries, a growing international student population here on campus, a global alumni family, and [a network of 12 locations](#) in 10 countries, [Notre Dame's global engagement has never been greater](#). But we have more work to do.

In partnership with 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. After months of discussions with key stakeholders across campus, including 13 different focus groups, that strategy will be finalized and published as an addendum to the framework in the spring semester.

Looking Ahead

We continue to work to implement and advance the many objectives identified in the framework, each with its own metrics, possibilities, and challenges. We are actively considering our educational, research, and policy opportunities in Washington, D.C. And in the spring, we will formally announce a transformative gift to support the humanities and the liberal arts.

Data and Computational Science

At the beginning of the semester, the [task force on data and computational science](#) delivered its report outlining a vision, strategy, and operational plan for data and computational science research and data and digital literacy education at Notre Dame. University leaders are carefully considering these recommendations and will be engaging with faculty and staff leaders in these areas throughout the coming months to discuss next steps.

Connections Series

Thanks to those of you who turned out for the fall Connections Series events focusing on Bioengineering and Life Sciences and ND Learning. The spring 2025 Connections Series will kick off by featuring [the Arts Initiative](#) on Tuesday, February 18. More opportunities to engage with the Strategic Framework Initiatives will be announced early next semester.

Strategic Framework Grants

This summer, we [announced the first awards](#) in the University-wide Strategic Framework Grant Program, funding six interdisciplinary research teams and two teaching projects. Applications are now open for [a new round of funding](#). This grant program serves as a broad invitation to faculty to creatively imagine ways to align their research and teaching efforts with the Strategic Framework and to provide University support for these efforts. Faculty from all academic units are invited to submit proposals by Monday, March 3.

In closing, we are pleased to report on our progress to date, knowing that even this lengthy letter does not capture all of the valuable, ongoing work to advance the framework and to support the mission of the University. Thank you to everyone involved for their leadership and good spirit as together we build the Notre Dame the world needs. Best wishes to one and all for a joyous Christmas and a happy start to 2025.

Sincerely,

John T. McGreevy
Charles and Jill Fischer Provost

Shannon Cullinan
Executive Vice President

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