

University of Notre Dame *Institutional Initiatives*

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In 2011, the University of Notre Dame began a campus-wide initiative to integrate and enrich community engagement efforts and infrastructure. Building on engagement initiatives of the Center for Social Concerns (established in 1983) and efforts in each of the eight colleges and schools, the Office of the Provost has established a Community Engagement Coordinating Council to assess, support, and enhance work in this area. The council has developed an extensive strategic plan with four specific goals:

1. Develop and sustain the most optimal internal infrastructure to support and coordinate academic community engagement among faculty and staff.
2. Leverage the university's resources and mission to develop and implement an enduring commitment to the improvement of K-12 education systems and economic development in our local community.
3. Enhance the development of students as engaged learners, researchers, and citizens by fostering community-based opportunities that deepen students' sense of human solidarity and concern for the common good.
4. Improve the university's ability to share knowledge and more effectively coordinate activities in the community, both internally and externally.

The council includes representatives from each college, the Office of Public Affairs, and related institutes and centers that serve constituents in the United States and abroad.

To achieve the goals outlined, the council conducted a strategic analysis to learn from faculty and university administrators about perceived strengths and challenges with respect to community engagement. In addition, administrators and faculty at the university have facilitated dozens of focus groups with local community agencies and leaders, conducted a large-scale inventory of engagement activities, examined how the scholarship of engagement appears in the strategic plans of each college and school on campus, and performed an extensive benchmarking analysis with peer institutions in higher education. New means to assess

engagement outcomes, both academically and beyond the curriculum, have also been developed. Researchers are currently focused on creating better ways to examine how engagement contributes to long-term impacts and community flourishing (e.g., graduation rates, literacy, health indicators). Through the council, Notre Dame is also exploring means to further integrate engagement within university majors and minors, and in graduate student education.

As a Catholic research institution, the University of Notre Dame values and embraces reciprocal engagement with communities—local, regional, national, and international—as a powerful means for advancing human solidarity and justice. In such work, faculty and students are informed by the Catholic social tradition and teachings that underscore the principles of human dignity, the correlation of rights and responsibilities, respect for and participation of the poor, and environmental stewardship.

For more information, contact

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