

Notre Dame News

Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C., elected 18th president of the University of Notre Dame

📅 December 04, 2023

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The Board of Trustees of the University of Notre Dame has elected [Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C.](#), as the University's 18th president, effective July 1. He will succeed [Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.](#), who announced in October that he will step down at the end of the 2023-24 academic year after serving as president for 19 years.



Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C.

“We are thrilled that Father Dowd will be Notre Dame’s next leader,” said Jack Brennan, chair of Notre Dame’s Board of Trustees. “His character and intellect, along with his broad academic and administrative experience and his deep commitment to Notre Dame, make him an ideal person to lead the University into the future. Since its founding, Notre Dame has been led by a priest-president from the Congregation of Holy Cross, the religious order to which Father Sorin, the University’s founder, belonged. The University has had only three presidents in the last 70 years, each exceptional in their own right — Father Jenkins, Father Edward Malloy, C.S.C., and Father Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C. Father Dowd continues in this rich tradition.”

“I am deeply humbled and honored by the Board’s decision,” Father Dowd said. “We can all be grateful for Father Jenkins’ selfless and courageous leadership for almost two decades. Working together with others, his efforts have positioned the University extremely well in every way. We will build on those efforts. Informed by our Catholic mission, we will work together so that Notre Dame is an ever-greater

engine of insight, innovation and impact, addressing society's greatest challenges and helping young people to realize their potential for good."

"I thank and congratulate our Board of Trustees on selecting Father Dowd as Notre Dame's next president," Father Jenkins said. "An accomplished scholar, a dedicated teacher and an experienced administrator, Father Bob is also a faithful and generous priest. He will lead the University to being even more powerfully a force for good in the world."

Father Dowd currently serves as vice president and associate provost for interdisciplinary initiatives at Notre Dame, a position he has held since 2021. He is also an associate professor of political science and serves as a Fellow and Trustee of the University and religious superior of the Holy Cross community at Notre Dame.

A native of Michigan City, Indiana, Father Dowd graduated from Notre Dame in 1987, earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and economics, and entered Moreau Seminary in the fall of that year to explore his vocation to religious life and priesthood. During his time in the seminary, he asked to be assigned to East Africa and spent 18 months there. After professing final vows in the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1993 and being ordained a priest in 1994, he worked in Campus Ministry at Notre Dame, serving as associate rector of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart and as an assistant rector in one of the University's residence halls.

He began his graduate studies at UCLA in 1996, earning an M.A. in African studies in 1998 and a doctorate in political science in 2003. In 2004, Father Dowd joined Notre Dame's political science department as a member of the faculty. Specializing in comparative politics, his research has focused on how Christian and Islamic religious communities affect support for democratic institutions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. He has published articles in leading academic journals and a book with Oxford University Press.

In his current role, Father Dowd oversees several institutes, centers and other academic units at Notre Dame, including the Center for Social Concerns, DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, Fitzgerald Institute for Real Estate, iNDustry Labs, Institute for Educational Initiatives, Lucy Family Institute for Data and Society, McGrath Institute for Church Life, Notre Dame Technology Ethics Center, Office of Military and Veterans Affairs, ROTC programs and the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art. He also directs the approval and review process of institutes and centers.

He was previously an assistant provost for internationalization with Notre Dame

International, where his primary responsibilities included overseeing the Dublin Global Gateway and Kylemore Abbey Global Centre in Ireland and the São Paulo Global Center in Brazil, and establishing an office in Nairobi, Kenya, to promote and support Notre Dame's research and educational partnerships in Africa.

He is the founder of Notre Dame's Ford Program in Human Development Studies and Solidarity at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, which is animated by Catholic social teaching and dedicated to forging community-engaged research partnerships in the Global South. He is a fellow of the Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion, the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and the Nanovic Institute for European Studies in the University's Keough School of Global Affairs. He also serves as a trustee of Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, and a board member of Brother Andre Hospital in Nairobi.

Father Dowd's research has focused on African politics, identity politics, and religion and politics. His research has also explored the effects of religious beliefs and institutions on the integration of migrants/refugees in Europe and the effects of faith-based schools on citizenship and civic engagement in Africa. He is the author of the book "Christianity, Islam, and Liberal Democracy: Lessons from Sub-Saharan Africa."

Over his 19-year tenure as president, Father Jenkins is credited with advancing Notre Dame's mission as a Catholic research university; attracting and supporting superb faculty; fostering dramatic growth in research at the University; securing Notre Dame's admission in the Association of American Universities; ensuring the University's financial strength; admitting a talented, diverse student body; promoting continued excellence in undergraduate instruction; expanding Notre Dame's global engagement; and offering students an in-person education during the COVID-19 pandemic. A longtime member of the Commission on Presidential Debates, he is recognized nationally as an advocate of civil discourse, and he is a leading voice on the future of college athletics.

A video announcement is available [here](#) and a history of the University's presidency is available [here](#).

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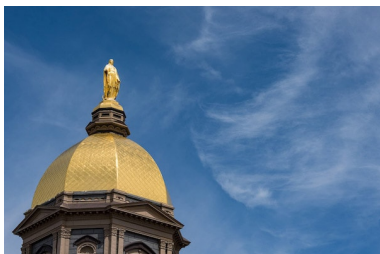
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