Dear Faculty, Staff and Students:

As we begin a new academic year, I write to announce the creation of a President's Oversight Committee on Diversity and Inclusion that will be part of a university-wide effort to extend and deepen the diversity and inclusivity of our campus community.

A diverse and inclusive community is important at Notre Dame for several reasons. With many colleges and universities across the nation, we believe that a diverse community offers a richer educational environment. What is more, as a Catholic university, Notre Dame is part of one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse organizations in the world today, and we strive to reflect that diversity ever more in our community. And as we invite individuals from many different backgrounds to participate in the Notre Dame community and, once here, to help every member of the community feel fully welcomed and included, we will better realize the aim identified in the University's Mission Statement: “to create a sense of human solidarity and concern for the common good that will bear fruit as learning becomes service to justice.”

We recognize today the critical steps taken in the past. As we recall the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King’s famous speech at the Lincoln Memorial, we remember Fr. Hesburgh’s historic work with the Civil Rights Commission, which helped transform a nation, and Fr. Malloy’s leadership in diversifying our student body. More recently, we have seen record numbers of students of color in our entering undergraduate class, consistent and significant increases in the representation of women faculty, the establishment of the Moreau Scholars program for underrepresented minorities, and the creation of an internship program for staff designed to support individuals from diverse backgrounds. Yet we know that the work of building a truly diverse and inclusive community is never fully completed, and that it is the responsibility of each of us to look for opportunities to better realize our ideals.

If we are to be the university we wish to be, diversity and inclusion must be priorities within each of the major groups of the university—students, staff and faculty—and commitment to these values must be reflected in all our efforts. Because challenges and opportunities in each area differ from one to another, different strategies must be formulated and employed by the leaders in their respective areas. At the same time, we must find a way for these areas to communicate and work together and to maintain an institutional focus on this goal.
In order to maintain that focus and facilitate appropriate communication, coordination and accountability, I have formed the President’s Oversight Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. I will chair the committee, and it will consist of the following individuals from various divisions of the university:

- Laura Carlson, Vice President and Associate Provost, Dean of the Graduate School
- Ann Firth, Chief of Staff, Office of the President (Vice-Chair)
- Erin Hoffmann Harding, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Bob McQuade, Vice President for Human Resources
- Dan Myers, Vice President and Associate Provost
- Hugh Page, Vice President and Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, Dean of First Year of Studies
- Matt Storin, Senior Project Specialist, Student Affairs
- Sarah Wake, Director, Office of Institutional Equity

The role of this committee is to ensure that initiatives are underway and progress is being made, rather than to manage efforts in particular areas. The emphasis will be on identifying areas for improvement, setting achievable and measurable goals, and monitoring progress toward those goals. Each division leader will be responsible for devising strategies and assembling their respective teams to accomplish key objectives. The committee will also, I hope, serve as a means of facilitating communication, cooperation and the sharing of ideas across divisions of the university.

Members of the committee will share information with the President’s Leadership Council and Deans’ Council at regular intervals. Periodic updates will also be provided to the Academic Council, at staff Town Hall meetings, and to student government leaders.

We are grateful to the many people, both those who are currently at Notre Dame and those who are not, who have worked hard to make Notre Dame more diverse and inclusive. It is now our duty to continue this effort. I believe that this committee will facilitate and coordinate initiatives across the various areas of the university that will help us become more fully the community we strive to be.

Respectfully,

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President