



July 25, 2019

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President
University of Notre Dame
400 Main Building
Notre Dame, IN 46556

Dear Fr. Jenkins,

We are happy to communicate to you the enclosed unanimous recommendations of the Columbus Murals Committee that you convened during the spring semester of the 2018-19 academic year. You charged our committee with addressing three key questions in the wake of your letter to the University community on the feast of Rev. Basil Moreau, C.S.C., founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, (January 20, 2019), in which you communicated the University's decision to no longer display the Columbus murals regularly in their current location. These questions were as follows:

1. How shall the University provide a place for the thoughtful consideration of the Luigi Gregori Columbus murals and the context of their composition in a setting other than their current location?
2. What will the coverings of the murals look like?
3. When and how should the original murals be displayed?

The committee arrived at a consensus regarding responses to these three questions, as detailed in the attached document. In brief, the committee recommends that the University should:

1. Undertake to create an exhibition about the early history of the University in the spaces on the second floor of the Main building that will be vacated by Admissions in 2022. The proposed exhibition would include, together with high-quality reproductions, a history and discussion of the Luigi Gregori Columbus murals in their rich and varied historical contexts, as outlined in the committee's recommendations below;
2. Install removable coverings over the murals that will feature flora and fauna of this region, whose iconography should be inspired by the holdings of the University's Greene-Nieuwland Herbarium and the Greene Collection in Hesburgh Library and by Christian (including Marian) iconographical motifs and by motifs characteristic of the indigenous peoples of the area;
3. Allow faculty who utilize the Luigi Gregori Columbus murals in their teaching and research, as well as other members of the community with appropriate purposes, to continue to access them occasionally, according to protocols established by the President's Office.

The committee wishes to offer two additional recommendations concerning further actions the University might take to foster continuing conversation, teaching and research about the murals and their various contexts. These were that the University:

1. Institute a university-wide annual observance of Founder's Day and, as part of this commemoration, display and invite dialogue about the Columbus murals in connection with a symposium that explores one or more aspects of Notre Dame's early history. According to this recommendation, the murals would be annually made available for viewing during the week surrounding the observance of Founder's Day.
2. Recognize in a public and tangible way the Native American communities that were so integral to the University's founding, by acting on one or more of the suggestions offered by the committee in the attached document.

We should like to stress, in conclusion, that in formulating these recommendations, every effort has been made by the committee to be consistent with the mission of the University of Notre Dame, a Catholic research university, as one committee member put it, "*rooted in Christianity and a belief in the dignity of all humans.*" Our recommendations, therefore, ought to be understood as intended to foster actions that are, in a new context and with new understandings, in true continuity with the aims of the founders of the University a century-and-a-half ago. In this spirit, the recommendations of the committee are not intended to avoid challenging or difficult questions, arguments or ideas that might make members of our community uncomfortable but rather to engage them. In other words, the recommendations of the committee concerning the Luigi Gregori murals, the proposed exhibit, and the protocols concerning their viewing should not be understood as being intended to silence or censor debate, discussion, dialogue, and argument but rather to foster them.

Thanks very much for your consideration of the committee's recommendations. Please let us know if you have questions or concerns about these recommendations. The members of the committee have expressed their willingness to contribute as needed to the continuing conversation and to the next phases of the Columbus murals project and University history exhibition as they unfold.

Finally, it's truly been a genuine pleasure for us to work with all the members of the committee. Thank you for entrusting us with this responsibility.

Sincerely yours,



Theodore J. Cachey Jr.
Ravarino Family Director of Italian and Dante Studies
Center for Italian Studies Professor of Romance Language



Ann M. Firth
Vice President and Chief of Staff to the President
Office of the President

Committee Membership

- Joseph Antenucci Becherer, *Director of the Snite Museum of Art*
- Elaine DeBassige, *Rector of Farley Hall*
- Julie Boynton, *Director of Interior Architecture, Facilities Design and Operations*
- Richard W. Garnett, *Paul J. Schierl/Fort Howard Corporation Professor of Law*
- Patrick Griffin, *Madden-Hennebry Family Professor of Irish-American Studies and Director of the Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies*
- Douglas K. Marsh, *Vice President for Facilities Design and Operations and University Architect*
- Marisel Moreno, *Rev. John A. O'Brien Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures*
- Yvette Pino, *Undergraduate Student*
- James Ryan, *Undergraduate Student and Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, Notre Dame Council*
- Michael Schreffler, *Associate Professor of Art History*
- Maria Tomasula, *Michael P. Grace Professor of Art*