Reverend Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C.
PRESIDENT

In December 2023, the University’s Board of Trustees elected Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C., as Notre Dame’s 18th president, effective June 1, 2024.

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.

Prior to being elected president, Father Dowd served as vice president and associate provost for interdisciplinary initiatives, was a member of the President’s Leadership Council, and oversaw several institutes, centers, and other academic units, 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 & 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. Father Dowd also served as religious superior of the Holy Cross Priests and Brothers at Notre Dame.

He was previously an assistant provost for internationalization with Notre Dame Global, 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, which, in keeping with Catholic Social Teaching, is 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.

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.

Since 2020, Father Dowd has served as a Fellow and Trustee of the University. He has also ministered to students on campus for many years as a priest-in-residence in Dillon, St. Edward’s, and Cavanaugh Halls. Father Dowd also serves as a trustee of Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, and a board member of Brother Andre Hospital in Nairobi.