



**Address to the USCCB Administrative Committee
Dr. Peter Kilpatrick
President
March 12, 2025**

Archbishop Broglio, Archbishop Lori, Your Excellencies, good morning.

I'd like to begin by thanking Archbishop Broglio and the Executive Committee for this opportunity to provide an update on The Catholic University of America.

Since I began my tenure as president three years ago, I have been immensely grateful for the support, counsel, and partnership of the Conference as the University pursues its mission to serve the Church and advance the dialogue between faith and reason, faithful to our Catholic identity.

Although not the only Catholic University in our nation, we are unique in our ties to you. I like to say that we were born from the very heart of the Church in America, for the heart of the Church and for the Gospel. Founded by Pope Leo XIII as the bishops' University, we look to your partnership as we form the nation's future clergy, canon lawyers, and lay faithful in sound doctrine, Catholic piety, and civic leadership.

A time of needed pruning

Last fall, I announced that the University was confronting a \$30M structural deficit that had persisted for some time. Our hope had been that the University could grow its way out of financial difficulty, focusing efforts on expanding enrollment. Yet in 2024 a number of external factors, including the lingering negative impacts of the COVID pandemic, inflation, the rising costs of

Office of the President

620 Michigan Ave., N.E. | Washington, DC 20064 | 202-319-5100 | president.catholic.edu |

operations, a higher than normal denial of student visas, and operational flaws in the federal student loan application process, all compounded, requiring us to take immediate action to course-correct and ensure our future financial stability.

In late October, I announced the rollout of a comprehensive strategy to realign the budget of the University. Our remarkable Board of Trustees, led by 5 cardinals, 7 bishops, 3 priests and religious, and 27 lay men and women, have proven steadfast and united, leading us and guiding us through this process.

We have worked diligently on a financial plan that includes the reorganization of our schools, some reductions in faculty and staff, and improvements in our operational efficiencies. And we have taken great measures to protect our core mission throughout the process, leveraging our unique position as the bishops' research university and prioritizing the formation of the next generation of Catholic leaders.

While difficult to implement, we are confident these adjustments are positioning the University for a very strong future. Indeed, we are projecting some significant revenue growth this coming fiscal year despite the challenging headwinds.

I am grateful for your partnership through efforts like the National Collection for The Catholic University of America, Diocesan Impact Scholarships, and the enrollment of your diocesan priests and lay leaders in our many degree programs. These manifestations of support allow us to provide a vibrant Christ-centered campus life, faith education, scholarships, and student opportunities to our nearly 5,300 students, many of whom are from your parishes, schools, or seminaries.

A time of promising growth

There is an old and wise saying that you cannot cut your way to success, and I am proud to report that, despite this season of pruning, the University continues to bear the fruit of accelerated growth.

For the past two years we have received record numbers of new student applicants, welcoming over 1,600 new undergraduate students from every region of the country, including a strong and

growing presence of Hispanic and African American students (over 35%), reflecting the vibrant diversity of our Church. We continue to draw students from the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, while expanding into the nation's South and West, and abroad.

Founded in 1887, The Catholic University of America was the second research university in the United States (after Johns Hopkins University), and is the oldest Catholic research university in the country. Building on this legacy, I am pleased to report that we achieved R1 Carnegie Foundation research status in February 2025, elevating the University to one of the top research universities in the United States.

This designation is considered the gold standard for research in the United States, granted to only 5% of universities nationwide. We are one of the smallest schools in the country to achieve this status, a remarkable achievement. This provides an excellent opportunity for the Church as a platform for Catholic intellectual leadership in the public square and national discourse.

With this designation, we are confident the University will continue to attract high-caliber students and we will increase investment in our research endeavors, growing the national profile and ranking of the University.

Externally funded research is already growing at an unprecedented rate of 15-20% each year through collaboration with partners like NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center on space weather and heliophysics and the Department of Energy and international governments on the vitrification of nuclear waste.

We are experiencing double digit growth in our Busch School of Business and our Conway School of Nursing, and a 47% increase in applications to our Columbus School of Law. All three of these programs are distinguished among their peers for their distinctively Catholic, Christ-centered approach to their disciplines, focused on the dignity of the human person and anchored in Catholic social teaching.

Meanwhile we are launching more programs that bolster our Catholic identity, such as a new online masters degree program in Evangelization, graduate degree programs in virtue-based A.I.

(Artificial Intelligence), and advanced nursing degrees with a grounding in Christian ethics, to address the national healthcare crisis.

We are seeing that when we lean into what makes us distinctive, namely our faithfully Catholic identity, it redounds to our success.

It strikes me that much of our current research supports the wide scope of issues that you, our bishops, are seeking to address within your USCCB committees, including the defense and care for the weak and vulnerable and Pope Francis's charge to care for our common home. Just this week the [National Catholic Register featured an article](#) on a collaboration underway between our architecture students and the Archdiocese of Newark to integrate net-zero design into archdiocesan buildings in the spirit of Laudato Si. The pastoral formation of priests, suicide prevention, vaccine delivery, robotic assistance technology for stroke survivors, and the containment of nuclear waste are just a very small sampling of the topics our faculty and students engage in daily. I welcome a conversation on how we might place our growing research capacity and endeavors at greater service to this Conference.

Forming Catholic leaders remains at the core of our mission

The top priority for the University remains the formation of new generations of Catholic leaders, both lay and clergy, and we advance this mission through initiatives both on and off campus.

Virtue formation at the University has long been incorporated into campus ministry and our core curriculum in philosophy and theology. Twelve years ago we founded the Busch School of Business with the purpose of incorporating virtue and character formation into the very framework of the study and practice of business.

This year, we are going a step further, incorporating virtue formation throughout our entire course catalog, providing all undergraduate students with the intellectual formation and practice of virtue that will benefit them throughout their lives.

For over 100 years, the Basselin Scholars program has educated more than 670 priest scholars outstanding in intellectual curiosity and academic performance. The program currently funds up to 15 full-tuition, three-year scholarships for seminarians, and thanks to the generosity of new donors,

significant new funding has been secured to expand the number of scholarships. Eighteen current bishops are Basselin Scholars, including Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Bishop John Barres, and Bishop Robert Barron, and we are very grateful for the continued support and awareness you each bring to that program: thank you.

Last fall, Cardinal Sean O'Malley concluded his many years of service on our Board of Trustees. In his honor, we launched the Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley Endowed Chair for the Study of Hispanic Catholics in America, housed within the School of Theology and Religious Studies, to explore how the experiences, needs, and expectations of Hispanic Catholics impact the Church in the United States. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to those of you in this room and your brother bishops, whose generous support allowed us to raise two-and-a-half million of the three-million dollars needed to endow this chair. A search to fill the chair will begin this fall.

Outside of the classroom, faculty and staff across campus dedicate time and talent to the Church's pastoral work. Examples include: the Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Excellence in Preaching Initiative, helping priests, deacons, seminarians, and laity enhance their effectiveness in preaching; the Welcoming Children in Worship initiative, developing worship resources for school aged children; the Catholic Project, offering resources on topics critical to the life of the Church, such as priesthood in America, eucharistic revival, synodality, and challenges of diocesan bankruptcy; the Catholic Immigration and Advocacy Conference held on campus annually; and the Lumen Accreditation program of our Institute to Transform Catholic Education, now accrediting nearly 400 Catholic schools in 17 dioceses in different 10 states.

These are only a few of the many examples of our community's support for the pastoral work of the greater Church.

Honoring our partnership with you

Before closing, I would like to take a moment to address our long-standing relationship with you, our bishops.

We pride ourselves in being "the bishops' university," a reference not only to our historical origins but to your role in the leadership and governance of our institution.

Just yesterday, we gathered to formally welcome our University's new chancellor, Cardinal Robert McElroy, as he was installed as the eighth Archbishop of Washington. I was blessed to work closely with Cardinal Wilton Gregory, his predecessor, and I am confident that Cardinal McElroy will likewise be a close collaborator, a wise counselor, and an advocate for our University.

We also share a neighborhood, often called "Little Rome" for its variety of churches, religious houses, and Catholic ministries within a few blocks of our campus and your headquarters. Many of these institutions were established in purposeful proximity to the University. The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, founded by Bishop Thomas J. Shahan, the fourth rector of The Catholic University of America, was first built as our University's church, only later to be separately incorporated. Neighborhood seminaries and religious houses of study were built as residences for men and women pursuing degrees in our ecclesiastical schools. In fact, the location of the USCCB was chosen for its proximity to the University and the Catholic community that had grown around it.

We remain forever grateful to the Conference for your support of the University through out the years, and in a particular way through the National Collection. Last year, this annual appeal secured over \$5M for the University, funding that is critical to sustain a vibrant environment of faith for students and seminarians, and to support the many apostolic initiatives underway by faculty and staff, only some of which I have mentioned here today.

We are grateful to you as well for encouraging young people to consider the University. Many of you, already sponsor Diocesan Impact Scholarships or Bishops Scholarships for students within your communities. Seven dioceses currently partner with us on these scholarships, including: Arlington, Brownsville, Boston, Galveston-Houston, Newark, and Denver. Not long ago, the [Detroit Catholic profiled Sarah Friedman](#), one of three students who are sponsored by the Archdiocese of Detroit. You'll find a copy of this article in the materials I have shared with you. Sarah had attended Catholic schools her entire life, so she was interested in attending a college with a strong Catholic identity. The Archdiocese of Detroit has helped ensure that Sarah's formation in the faith could continue while still maintaining a special connection with her home Archdiocese. This is a beautiful way to continue forming our young people in our faith.

Please continue to send young Catholics to us. Every student who is a member of any parish in the U.S. is eligible for a renewable \$4,000 annual Parish Scholarship, in addition to any other merit or financial aid. Through our [student referral program](#), any parent, priest, bishop, or family member can suggest a student who shows promise in academics, leadership, athletics, or community involvement, and that student will get personalized admissions support. And please consider supporting young people from your diocese by means of an Impact Scholarship.

I want to close by inviting you to campus. We would love to welcome you and arrange for you to preside at a Mass, give a lecture, or host a lunch or dinner with students from your diocese. It is a great way to get to know your students in an informal setting and hear about the ways that they are engaging the faith during their time in studies.

Many of you are alumni. On June 3rd, our Office of Diocesan Engagement and our new Priest and Religious Alumni Association, “Cardinals for Christ” will sponsor a Day of Renewal for Clergy and Consecrated Religious on the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*, in celebration of the 2025 Jubilee Year. Consider joining us and share this invitation with your clergy. All are invited, you do not need to be an alum to attend.

Finally, I established the [Office of Diocesan Engagement](#) to ensure you have a liaison within the University. The Director, Dennis Strach, is here with us this morning, and is happy to speak with you and coordinate anything you need. His contact information, along with information on many of the initiatives I spoke about today, are included in the resources we provided to you this morning through the General Secretariat.

It has been an honor to be here with you and provide a brief update on The Catholic University of America. Thank you for giving me the gift of your time and attention. I’d like to open the floor for questions and discussion.