

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

September 24, 2010 at 7:19am

Notre Dame names coordinator for life initiatives

by Catholic News Service

SOUTH BEND, Ind. Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame, has named Mary K. Daly to the newly created position of coordinator for university life initiatives.

Daly, a 2010 Notre Dame graduate, was president of Notre Dame Right to Life as a student.

The university announced Sept. 20 that Father Jenkins created the post in response to a recommendation from the Task Force on Supporting the Choice for Life, which said structures must be created to implement previous recommendations and continue the work of the group. The task force completed its term of service in May.

Earlier this year it issued a set of preliminary recommendations designed to "broaden and deepen the pro-life culture" at the university.

The group called for undergraduate "witness to life" research opportunities in various academic disciplines; adoption of a policy statement on the university's "support for Catholic teaching on the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death"; and guidelines on how to "avoid formal or immediate material complicity in evils such as abortion and torture" in charitable gifts and investments.

Since then, the pro-life policy statement has been adopted and the guidelines regarding gifts and investments have been developed. In addition, Father Jenkins' participation this past January in the March for Life in Washington came out of the task force recommendations.

Daly will coordinate efforts already under way to implement the task force suggestions and serve as a liaison between various university units to facilitate collaboration on life issues. She also will seek ways to broaden and deepen respect for the sanctity of life from conception to natural death within the Notre Dame community and beyond.

Her office will be in the Institute for Church Life and she will report to John C. Cavadini, the institute's director and co-chair of the task force. She'll report to Father Jenkins through Cavadini.

One of her first duties will be to help organize a faculty advisory committee to be chaired by Cavadini.

Father Jenkins formed the task force a year ago to consider ways Notre Dame can support the sanctity of life. Its creation followed what Father Jenkins called "the vigorous discussions" surrounding President Barack Obama's visit to campus to deliver the commencement address in May 2009. He also received an honorary law degree.

Critics of Obama's appearance on campus, including dozens of U.S. bishops, said the president's support of legal abortion and embryonic stem-cell research made him an inappropriate choice.

The situation ignited a national debate on the university's status as a Catholic university.

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When he appointed the task force, Father Jenkins charged its members with outlining how "the university could increase and manifest its own commitment to a culture of life across our campus and in partnership with other constituencies in the Notre Dame family, including our alumni."

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