



State of the Union Address
University of Notre Dame
March 25, 2015

Mr. Chairperson, members of senate, executive cabinet, and guests, thank you and good evening.

It has been an honor to serve with you over the course of this year. It has been a privilege to serve alongside my good friend and a great leader, Matt Devine. Matt, your commitment and care for our student body goes without question and I have felt so proud to stand with you in our work. Thank you, Shannon Montague for your work and for your commitment to the Student Union. You have been a friend to everyone in the Union and have been a wonderful addition to our office. Thank you, Peggy Hnatusko for your continued guidance and commitment to each and every student in this room and on our campus. I know I speak for our Senate when I say that we feel privileged to call you our advisor. Thank you to Brian Coughlin, who many of you may not know well. Brian Coughlin, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, works with our team behind the scenes, advising our initiatives and keeping us on track. BC, this year would have been impossible without your invaluable council and unwavering support. Finally, senators, thank you for your service to this Student Union and for meeting each week to represent what is in the best interest of our peers. You voiced the opinions of your halls and constituents and truly led conversations with heart and purpose.

It is understandable that as a student government we cannot be everywhere at once, but we can certainly do everything in our power to make our time in office count; I believe we have done just that. We began the year with a campus conversation on safety. Students brought concerns of safe means of transportation and general safety on and off

campus. We addressed these concerns in meetings with local law enforcement in tandem with a safety summit, which sat 60-70 students in the audience. We were set in ensuring that our students felt safe on campus, so we partnered with NDSP to replace what was the Safe Walk program. The new O'SNAP program, funded in large part through our office's budget, has seen immense growth and usage over the course of the last few months. Ridership is up significantly and, understanding some of the inefficiencies in the new program, we created an app to alleviate any frustrations. The recent release of the O'SNAP app has driven this program to even greater success. We opened conversation about readership on campus and what it means to be a "current university" with students engaged in national conversation. With all of your help, we took feedback from our residents and off-campus students and we negotiated contracts with the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. This is the first year we have had both publications readily available on this campus.

We reevaluated what it meant to engage with the South Bend community and did so meaningfully. Building the 29 for 29 program was not easy and it took a significant amount of effort from all of our students and the program's leadership, but it's place on our campus has resulted in local underprivileged families visiting our campus regularly, and having the opportunity to partake in the Notre Dame family as honorary members. We look forward to seeing this program grow and strengthen for years to come. We brought students and student-athletes together by opening conversation about the Alma Mater policy. In meetings with the Football Unity Council, we found a way to ease player concerns by further promoting a sense of community and support among all of our peers, which resulted in the reinstatement of the Alma Mater after all home football games for the 2014 season.

Initiation of smaller, yet just as important initiatives, such as Quad Markets, Political Brew, Coffee with Professors, Press Clips, Resume Workshops, Photoshop Classes, and many others, have all played into our efforts to serve our students as best we can...yet, the conversation needs to go further than that.

As a campus, we still struggle with instances of sexual assault and the complexities of student stress and mental health. We understand that our community cannot be a healthy one unless all of our students have a comfortable and fruitful home under the Dome. This is why we continue our

conversations with University stakeholders, administrators, faculty, and students to provide all we can in the realm of support for the Notre Dame family. We will continue our work on the Board of Trustees report, presenting some of our preliminary findings this evening, with the hopes of fully expounding on the research the Campus Life Council has conducted as well as our findings to the Board of Trustees in May. I encourage Bryan and Nidia to continue working to support our students in every way possible, especially in these areas of concern. With that, I would like to officially welcome Bryan Ricketts and Nidia Ruelas to Senate. I am confident in their abilities to represent the student body and I look forward to the work they will do in their time in office.

With the closing of our term, I would like to share a note I found deep in the desk of the Student Body President. It is a note from Father Hesburgh to the then Student Body President and Vice President. In this 1985 letter, Father Hesburgh writes his 10 commandments for student leaders, and it has served as my guiding light every day since. I will read this list now:
[Enclosure 1]

I urge you all to continue your good work for this University. Notre Dame is the greatest University in the world and our Student Body is unlike any other. Always lead with your heart and when in office, never fail to put the interests of others ahead of your own. It is when you follow the needs of your constituents and peers that you are truly leading.

God bless you all and thank you for all you've given to the Student Union.

Ever devotedly in Notre Dame,

Lauren A. Vidal

Student Body President
University of Notre Dame