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March 28, 2001

An Open Letter Regarding the Development of Service
and Experiential Learning Opportunities

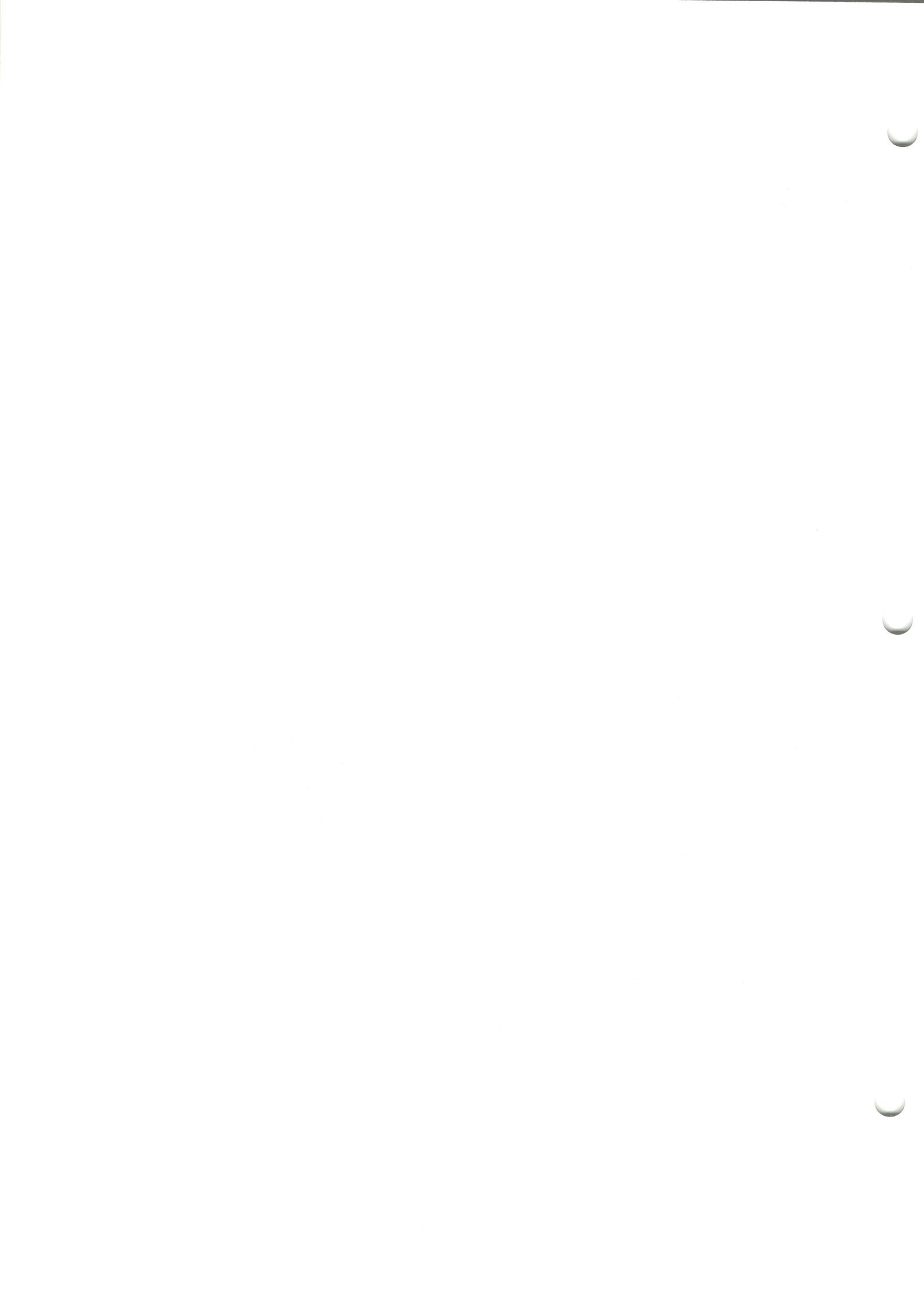
Dean Mark W. Roche
Chair of Undergraduate Committee of the Academic Council
137 O'Shaughnessy Hall

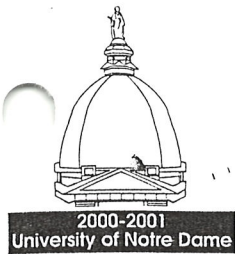
Dear Dean Roche:

The Academic Affairs Committee of the Student Senate has researched the opportunities that exist for students to participate in learning that goes beyond the classroom and enters into the realm of personal experience. We have found many mutually beneficial opportunities in the programs offered by the Center for Social Concerns (CSC): seminars; Summer Service Projects; and classes developed by various departments, mostly within the College of Arts and Letters, in conjunction with the CSC. It is this last category that we wish to address with you and the Academic Council.

We feel that students should have more opportunities to take the knowledge they have gained in conventional classes to see where these things fit in the community and in broader life experience. Since experiential learning, in the words of Notre Dame's own Experiential Learning Council (ELC), "emphasizes direct, 'hands-on' involvement as a catalyst to learning," we would like to see more opportunities for students to engage in such learning. The ELC also explains that "[s]ervice-learning--also based in experience--captures the reciprocal potential of service both to assist and promote reflective engagement and learning."

Many programs exist at Notre Dame that allow students to participate in experiential learning, even some outside the traditional base of arts and letters. For example, engineering students can participate in Engineering Projects In Community Service (EPICS), business students can take one of several courses dealing with the marketing and management of nonprofit organizations, and science students can reinforce classroom learning with their experiences working at the Logan Center. Such programs have a positive impact on the community and on the lives of students who may not be able to take a great many theology or other arts and letters electives. These are good programs, and we would like to see more of them available to students.





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In its mission statement, the Center for Social Concerns says that it intends to "provide educational experiences in social concerns inspired by Gospel values and Catholic social teachings." We commend the CSC for its commitment to this mission and to its efforts to make the Notre Dame community more aware of the realities that exist beyond our campus. We also recognize, and urge you to recognize, that the CSC has many untapped resources in the areas of experiential and service learning.

In light of these reasons and in the spirit of the Spring 1999 Report to the University of Notre Dame Board of Trustees, entitled *Living Knowledge: Experiential Learning and Notre Dame*, we ask that the Academic Council would consider addressing these issues in the curriculum revisions scheduled for Fall 2002. We would like for every department in every college to consider developing at least one class that incorporates experience or service as a major component of the learning process. The CSC has many resources to assist departments in exploring their options for such classes.

We thank you for considering this suggestion and encourage you to take action on it in 2002.

In Notre Dame,

Kathleen Bufalino
Chair, Academic Affairs Committee

Kristen Caponi
Academic Affairs Committee

I, Brooke Elizabeth Norton, Chairman of the Student Union Senate, do certify that Resolution S0001-38 was considered, debated, and passed according to proper legislative procedure with twenty-five Student Senators voting in the affirmative on Wednesday, March 28, 2001.

Brooke Elizabeth Norton

Now, therefore, I, Brian Patrick O'Donoghue, President of the University of Notre Dame's Undergraduate Student Body, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution of the Undergraduate Student Body of the University of Notre Dame, have set my hand this twenty-eighth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand and one.

Brian Patrick O'Donoghue

