

NOTRE DAME DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

2025 YEAR-END UPDATE

The Notre Dame Democracy Initiative is establishing the University as a leader in the study of democracy in the U.S. and around the world. It renews the strength of democracy by advancing rigorous research, preparing students for civic leadership, and convening influential voices across political divides.

“Over the past year, the Democracy Initiative advanced cutting-edge research, expanded opportunities for students, and convened thought leaders across the disciplines to tackle urgent and complex challenges to democracy around the world.”



David Campbell

*Director, Democracy Initiative,
and Packey J. Dee Professor of American
Democracy, Department of Political Science*

CATALYZING RESEARCH

To support faculty and graduate student projects, the Initiative created the **Democracy Catalyst Grant** program. After two rounds of funding, it **now supports 67 projects with more than \$2 million in investments**. Over 100 scholars across campus — including historians, data scientists, philosophers, theologians, economists, designers, and education researchers — are leading teams that include faculty, postdoctoral scholars, institute staff, graduate students, and undergraduates. **Anticipated outputs include over two dozen conferences, at least 10 book volumes, more than 20 academic papers, and four new courses.**

67

Democracy Catalyst projects

led by **100+ scholars** across
5 Notre Dame colleges and schools.



FORMING LEADERS

Launched the inaugural cohort of **Democracy Fellows**, a program that supports and inspires the next generation of public servants and democracy scholars. Fellows qualify for special research funding and exclusive opportunities for faculty mentorship, alumni networking, and engagement with University leaders and guest speakers.

48

Undergraduate Democracy Fellows

preparing to be the next
generation of public servants
and democracy scholars.

EXPANDING CAPACITY

In October, the Initiative celebrated a **transformative gift** from the Rooney family to create the new Rooney Democracy Institute. In partnership with the Democracy Initiative, the new institute will pursue cutting-edge research through its labs and the Health of Democracy Survey.



CONVENING FOR IMPACT

The Initiative's signature **Democracy Talks series** launched with nine events that drew more than 2,000 participants for conversations with **governors, cardinals, ambassadors**, and luminary scholars. It also contributed to two major scholarly conferences: the Rooney Democracy Institute's 2025 **Keeping the Republic Conference** and the Kellogg Institute's **Global Democracy Conference**. In May, the Initiative hosted the **National Convening on Social Media and Democracy**, bringing together leaders and scholarly experts on misinformation, technology, social media, and democracy to bridge the gap between research and policy. The convening launched a collaborative effort to draft a **nonpartisan policy roadmap**.



2,000+
participants
in Initiative-sponsored
convenings



9 Democracy
Talks events

BUILDING DREAM TEAMS

The Initiative also helped the University recruit world-class democracy scholars, with additional faculty recruitment underway.



Ken Kollman

*William M. Scholl
Professor of Politics and
Professor, Keough School
of Global Affairs*



Saad Gulzar

*Associate Professor of
Political Science and
Global Affairs*



RESEARCH THAT BRIDGES DIVIDES

Political scientist Erin Rossiter studies whether dialogue can ease America's deep partisan divides. In a **recent project**, she found that structured conversations across party lines helped participants view one another with more respect, even when disagreements remained. Her work generates new insights into depolarization and informs teaching and student research, equipping the next generation with tools to foster dialogue and strengthen democracy. This is precisely the sort of research that is the calling card of Notre Dame's Democracy Initiative.



*Erin Rossiter is the Nancy Reeves Dreux
Assistant Professor of Political Science.*