Dear Members of the University Community,

The recent release of more than 1,300 pages of grand jury proceedings detailing sexual abuse by Catholic priests in Pennsylvania and failures by Church leaders in responding to these situations is justifiably generating international attention and outrage. Since the report’s release last week, the University has considered how best to respond to the deeply disturbing report and to past honors and recognition it has bestowed upon individuals named in it.

Earlier today, I consulted with a group of administrators, faculty, alumni and student leaders to recommend a course of action to the Board of Trustees. This afternoon, the Board met in special session and unanimously approved our recommendations.

With sympathy for and in solidarity with victims of sexual abuse in the Diocese of Scranton, The University of Scranton will rescind honorary degrees and rename campus buildings recognizing Bishops Jerome D. Hannan, J. Carroll McCormick, and James C. Timlin. As documented in the report, these Bishops covered up the crimes and misdeeds of men who were under their jurisdiction and placed children in harm’s way.

Buildings previously named for these three Bishops will be renamed as follows:

- McCormick Hall will be renamed MacKillop Hall in honor of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, an Australian nun who founded the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart and who publicly exposed the sexual abuse of children by a priest. In her life, she faced persecution and excommunication, during which she was assisted by the Jesuits until later being absolved. Pope Benedict XVI named Sr. Mary Australia’s first saint in 2010.

- The name on Timlin House will be removed and Mulberry Plaza, the complex in which the building is located, will be renamed Romero Plaza in honor of the late Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, who will be canonized by Pope Francis on October 14. Murdered in 1980 while saying mass in San Salvador, Archbishop Romero remains an inspiration to millions, including many on the University’s campus who have made the moving pilgrimage to El Salvador.

- Hannan Hall will be renamed Giblin-Kelly Hall in honor of the late Brendan J. Giblin ’06 and William H. Kelly Jr. ’93. Brendan was a graduating senior at Scranton and co-captain of the swim team when he was tragically killed while on Spring Break in Panama City. Bill worked for Bloomberg, LP in Princeton, N.J. and their affiliate, Bloomberg Tradebook LLC, in New York City. On September 11, 2001, Bill attended a conference at Windows on the World at the World Trade Center, Tower One, and was killed in the attack that destroyed those buildings. Since Bill and Brendan died, their family and friends have devotedly kept their memory alive, transforming tragedy into good in support of future students at Scranton.

In choosing to honor St. MacKillop, Archbishop Romero, Brendan and Bill, we hold up the example of their lives as a reminder always to be a voice against abuse and violence no matter the
cost, to champion the poor and oppressed, and to treasure the bonds of friendship and community that are at the heart of The University of Scranton.

These actions are important, but the gravity of the information we now know demands even more of us. As a Catholic and Jesuit university founded by the Diocese of Scranton, The University of Scranton will strive together with the people of the Diocese and Catholics everywhere to address the difficult but necessary questions that arise from the grand jury report. As a university community, we look forward to working with the people of the Diocese to assist in facilitating discussions and reflection in the long but hopeful process to rebuild trust and find peace. In support of this initiative, the University is devoting resources to advance the programs and projects that emerge from our collaboration.

Additionally, I recognize that stories from the past two weeks can trigger painful memories for members of our campus community who themselves are living with the lifelong scars of sexual abuse. Please be assured that the staff of the Counseling Center and Campus Ministries are available to help students and that the University’s employee assistance program is always available for faculty and staff.

On this journey, I ask that you pray for the healing of all victims of sexual abuse and their families and that you pray also for the people of the Diocese of Scranton and the Universal Church.

Sincerely,

Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.
President