THE PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL
The Latin word *magis*, meaning “more, to a greater extent,” is one of the core principles of a Jesuit education. But it is much more than an abstract concept. It is a lifelong call to strive for excellence, to make the most of our God–given talents and use them to serve others.

The spirit of *magis* animates the Fordham University President’s Council, a group of successful professionals and philanthropists who are committed to mentoring Fordham’s future leaders, funding key initiatives, and raising the University’s profile.

Joseph M. McShane, S.J., president of Fordham University, established the President’s Council in 2004. Since then, accomplished alumni, parents, and friends have been sharing their time, creativity, and financial resources with Fordham, and the council’s impact on the lives of students and young alumni grows each year.

The President’s Council has nearly 100 members, drawn from across the professional world, contributing their time and expertise for the benefit of future Fordham generations.
A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Before attending Fordham, I was familiar with the core Jesuit values of *magis* and *cura personalis* from my studies at Regis High School. When I arrived at Rose Hill, I was thrilled to see these values thriving at a major New York City university. Academic rigor and intellectual curiosity permeated the campus. Meeting the needs of each student was truly at the heart of the mission, and everyone—from staff to professors to the University president—was invested in my personal and professional growth. This experience makes me deeply grateful to Fordham.

Furthering this student-centered culture has been the most rewarding aspect of serving on the President’s Council. Members of the council mentor students, speak on campus, fund initiatives, and host events, providing students with insights and experiences that nourish their development and have a meaningful impact on their careers. As a partner at Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP, I counsel students interested in careers in law; my wife and fellow council member Elizabeth Cosenza, FCRH ’98, chair of the law and ethics department at the Gabelli School of Business, also mentors students as they consider career options. Many other council members similarly assist and selflessly guide our students.

Every year I look forward to the reception that Elizabeth and I host for newly admitted students. Notably, Father McShane always attends, and he demonstrates his commitment to *cura personalis* by establishing a deep connection with each prospective student. This is just one example of why Fordham remains unique.

I am honored to serve as chair of the council. It is an exciting time as Fordham continues to rise in national prominence. That being said, I find it heartening that the University is still a place where students flourish not only by vigorously pursuing academic excellence and challenging themselves and those around them, but also by receiving personalized attention and guidance. Together, I believe that we can sustain the highest Jesuit values in educating our students, thereby ensuring that all of them meet the highest promise of their potential.

Todd Cosenza, GABElli ’95, LAW ’98
Chair
Looking back on his time at Fordham, Terry Begley recalls a favorite professor who was “extraordinarily accessible” to students. In a way, Begley follows in the professor’s footsteps when he gets calls from Fordham students and recent graduates seeking advice.

“I try to talk to every one of them,” says Begley, CEO of corporate banking for PNC Financial Services Group. “I love the interaction with the students and the young alumni.”

He finds a lot of opportunities for it, speaking in business classes and dispensing advice at dinners for Gabelli students, two of his many efforts to give back to the University. The Fordham network helped him launch his career with business-side internships at People magazine and Pfizer, and his leadership style benefited from the Jesuit values of Fordham, he says.

He’s excited to keep networking with fellow President’s Council members to generate opportunities for students. The council is “very much a connection point” to the professional world, he says. “Talking to each other and sharing ideas, you can make things happen.”

He and his wife, Tracy O’Neill, FCRH ’87, have a son who graduated from Fordham and another who is enrolled at Fordham Prep. Between their parent roles and their involvement with the University, “we’re literally on campus every week,” he says. “It keeps us young.”

“A Fordham education is education for leadership. Good judgment, moral clarity, openness to diverse views—these all arise out of the University’s Jesuit principles.”
Anne Williams-Isom’s life reflects the story and values of Fordham. A daughter of immigrants from Trinidad and Tobago, she first learned about the struggles of vulnerable children and families and the importance of social justice while growing up in Queens, where she attended Catholic schools. And her post-Fordham career led her to a nationally prominent antipoverty organization that aligns with the Jesuit philosophy of cura personalis.

As CEO of the Harlem Children’s Zone, she oversees programs that serve 14,000 children from birth through college, supporting the entire person. In her words, “We make sure that we do everything for them academically, but we also want to focus on their character and their health and their sense of giving back.”

A strong believer in Father McShane’s vision for the University, she has helped with mentoring students from underrepresented backgrounds as a President’s Council member. And the spiritual strength Fordham helped her develop is evident in stirring remarks she has delivered at University events including a Graduate School of Social Service diploma ceremony and the second annual Women’s Philanthropy Summit.

In striving to advance the University or other causes, “be joyful warriors,” she said at the summit. “That joy is a vital ingredient. It is the spark that can light the way for you and for others around you.”

“As far as I’m concerned, philanthropy is a part of having a full life. All of us need to walk in our purpose and to connect to that light that is inside of us.”
v: to beget, engender, produce, create

Rick Calero joined the Army just a week after graduating from Xavier High School in Manhattan. Years later, one of his Jesuit guidance counselors lamented that the military got him first. “You would have made a great Jesuit,” he said.

A seasoned executive with more than 20 years’ experience, Calero is head of banking and lending for BNY Mellon Wealth Management. In this role, he is responsible for devising a strategy to foster growth in what is a crucial component of the firm’s client offering.

The sense of nobility Calero finds in his work is something he encountered in the military and in his Jesuit education. “There’s just a value system in both,” he said, whether that system is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ or the U.S. Constitution. “There is a cause greater than yourself.”

An ROTC scholarship brought Calero to Fordham. He studied economics at Fordham College at Lincoln Center, a few miles from where he grew up on 132nd and Broadway. He recently mentored a Fordham ROTC student and mentors Hispanic students who hope to work in finance, inspired by the sense of service that Fordham helped instill in him long ago. “Whether I was the Puerto Rican kid from the Upper West Side or the recent vet,” he says, “Fordham has just always been there.”

“Jesuit education is not just learning basic skills. It really is critical thinking.”
v: to excite, spur, inspire, increase

Peggy Smyth’s motivation for serving on the President’s Council is simple: “Everything good I have in my life,” she said, “I owe to Fordham.”

The chief financial officer for the U.S. at National Grid met her husband, Bernard Smyth, FCRH ’85, when she was studying economics at Fordham College at Rose Hill on a presidential scholarship. Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., now president emeritus of Fordham, baptized the couple’s two sons at the University Church. And Smyth is still best friends with her Fordham roommate.

Smyth achieved remarkable success in the business world at an early age; in 2002, Crain’s New York Business named her to its “40 Under 40” list. She went on to become a global business executive in some of the world’s biggest companies, including technology and energy firms.

After receiving a Fordham education, learning the “tech side” of her business was a challenge for which Smyth was prepared. “At Fordham you learn how to learn,” she said. “The world is constantly changing, so you always need to be studying to stay up-to-date. And Fordham teaches you that. That’s why I am a really big advocate of a liberal arts education.”

“Most Fordham students are pretty hungry to succeed, and that’s what I like to see. Attitude is everything.”
A Southern California native, Cindy Vojtech came to Fordham for the Catholic education and the Wall Street proximity. She was active in Campus Ministry, competed on the varsity volleyball and crew teams, and interned at Lehman Brothers. She went on to earn a doctorate in economics and is currently a principal economist for the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, D.C.

Fordham was a critical waypoint on her journey. As a student, she was challenged “not just academically, but athletically and spiritually, too,” says Vojtech, who graduated as valedictorian.

Her Fordham experiences have informed the ways in which she gives back as a President’s Council member. As an undergraduate, she was the first recipient of a scholarship created by Joan and John E. Toffolon Jr., GABELLI ’73, ’77, for talented female students at the Gabelli School of Business. In addition to mentoring students and cheering on the volleyball team when they are in D.C., Vojtech has given in support of scholarships as well as the volleyball and crew programs.

She developed a friendship with the Toffolons, whose generosity helped inspire her to join the council, and she strives to help students benefit from the kinds of experiences that shaped her at Fordham.

“All these experiences,” she says, “develop a person who is prepared to face any kind of challenge.”

“At Fordham, I found mentors in my coaches, professors, and teammates. Their support prepared me to thrive and grow in a team-based work environment.”
Joseph M. McShane, S.J., president of Fordham University, invites the members of the President’s Council to engage in the life and mission of the University in a variety of distinct and meaningful ways. Specifically, President’s Council members:

• provide philanthropic support to the University at the highest levels, sharing both the inspiration and leadership necessary to help Fordham realize its greatest dreams as an institution dedicated to wisdom and learning in the service of others;

• reach out to and engage the University’s admitted class, sharing with them the Fordham story and its lifelong impact;

• mentor current students and young alumni, promoting their academic success and career development;

• leverage corporate relationships to create enhanced opportunities for students and alumni;

• participate in the Executive in Residence program, guest-teaching classes and leading seminars in their areas of expertise;

• lend the volunteer leadership and support necessary to ensure the annual outstanding success of the Fordham Founder’s Dinner and Founder’s Scholarship Fund.

For more information about the President’s Council, please visit fordham.edu/prescouncil.