



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 3, 2026

Pro-abortion Professor Gives Up Notre Dame Directorship

Amid intense criticism from students, faculty, alumni, and [bishops](#), a pro-abortion professor has resigned from her appointment to a University of Notre Dame leadership post.

Independent student newspaper [The Observer](#) reported Thursday that Mary Gallagher, dean of the Keough School of Global Affairs, announced in an email that Associate Professor Susan Ostermann “has decided not to move forward as director of the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies.”

On January 8, Gallagher [trumpeted](#) Ostermann’s appointment, which would have been effective July 1, on the Keough School’s website. That [announcement](#) remains online; no mention of Ostermann’s resignation has yet been posted.

In a [statement](#) last week, Ostermann said, “At present, the focus on my appointment risks overshadowing the vital work the Institute performs, which should be allowed to continue without undue distraction.”

Pressure Points

Whether Ostermann chose to resign of her own volition or under pressure from the administration is [unknown](#).

Certainly, the administration was under enormous pressure from various groups both inside and outside the university to rescind Ostermann’s appointment because of her very public stand for abortion, which flies in the face of Notre Dame’s professed Catholic principles.

“There can be no dispute that Ostermann stands in stark contrast to fundamental Catholic moral teaching on the sacredness of human life,” Notre Dame Professor Emeritus of History Father Wilson Miscamble declared in a January 28 [First Things](#) article.

In a February 11 [statement](#) expressing his “dismay” over and “strong opposition” to Ostermann’s promotion, Kevin Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, wrote:

Professor Ostermann’s extensive public advocacy of abortion rights and her disparaging and inflammatory remarks about those who uphold the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death go against a core principle of justice that is central to Notre Dame’s Catholic identity and mission.



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Fetal Positions

Ostermann co-authored a raft of op-eds advocating unfettered abortion and attacking pro-lifers. “Abortion access is freedom-enhancing, in the truest sense of the word,” she [wrote](#) in 2022. Two months later, she [contended](#) that “white supremacy was one of the primary motivations behind the first movement to outlaw abortion in the United States” and that there is “misogyny embedded in anti-abortion movements.” Still later that year, she attempted to counter alleged [“lies about abortion,”](#) including “Abortions kill babies” and “Abortion is dangerous” — while simultaneously claiming pro-life pregnancy centers are “anti-abortion propaganda sites” that harm women. On top of all that, Ostermann had the gall to [assert](#) that abortion-on-demand falls squarely within the Catholic social teaching of [“integral human development”](#) because it “respects the inherent dignity of women, their freedom to make choices and to evaluate medical and other risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth.”

Carter Snead, a Notre Dame professor of law and professor of political science, told the [National Catholic Register](#) in January:

I don’t know Professor Ostermann and have nothing against her personally or as a colleague, but I confess to being quite shocked by the inflammatory rhetoric and uncharitable tone of her *eleven* op-eds ... to say nothing of the tendentious and confused substance of the arguments themselves. [Emphasis in original.]

Ostermann’s abortion advocacy became so problematic that Notre Dame’s then-president, Father John Jenkins, was compelled to write a [letter](#) to the editor of the *Chicago Tribune* distancing the university from her columns.

Population Parer

Another cause for consternation among the faithful was Ostermann’s work with the Rockefeller-funded Population Council, which advocates for worldwide population control. The group’s most infamous success story is China, whose one-child policy led to the murder of [hundreds of millions](#) of unborn babies.

Anna Kelley, president of Notre Dame Right to Life, offered pointed commentary on this element of Ostermann’s *curriculum vitae* in a [letter](#) to *The Observer* opposing her elevation:

As a Catholic adoptee from China, I take personal offense at this appointment. I am so blessed to have escaped the fate that Professor Ostermann’s work has inflicted on so many innocent Chinese lives. Because I have been given the gift of life, I am choosing to speak out with my own testimony to bring attention to the real-life consequences that her ideology promotes.

The Punch Back of Notre Dame

In the face of such criticism, Notre Dame stood by its decision to promote Ostermann. In a statement to the *Register*, the university said Ostermann was “a highly regarded political scientist and legal scholar” who “demonstrates the rigorous, interdisciplinary expertise required to lead the Liu Institute.”

The problem with this defense, however, was pinpointed by Bill Dempsey, founding president of the



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Sycamore Trust, an alumni organization that seeks to preserve Notre Dame's Catholic identity. Dempsey told the *Register*:

Notre Dame would not promote a white supremacist or a Holocaust denier no matter how qualified in their fields, not because people would think the university shared their views, but because people would think the university did not regard the issues as very important. So here the signal is that the current administration, while espousing a pro-life stance, considers it of lesser importance.

Notre Dame President Father Robert Dowd apparently agreed. Sources told the [Register](#) last week that Dowd "was not happy with [Ostermann's] appointment and was in ongoing conversations about alternative outcomes" at the time of her resignation.

In the end, Ostermann's opponents won a clear victory. Nevertheless, Miscamble told the *Register*, "This sad episode reveals that there is much work to do to uphold the Catholic mission and identity of Notre Dame."



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