



THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 9 April 2020

Notre Dame announces Master of Bioethics Program to tackle the difficult questions of our time.

In a world confronted by the largest global health crisis in over a century, nations are working together to contain, treat and prevent COVID-19. In doing so, difficult questions are being asked and difficult actions are having to be made in homes, hospitals and communities.

In announcing the establishment of a new Master in Bioethics program, Notre Dame Vice Chancellor Professor Francis Campbell highlighted that “the collaboration between governments, health systems and scientists worldwide during this crisis has been unprecedented. Notre Dame is focusing our scholarly contribution on addressing the ethical dimension of dealing with these difficult questions.

“With two medical schools, two schools of philosophy and theology and deep international connections we can make a unique contribution to the immediate challenges of COVID-19 and the many other contemporary and emerging issues in health and biosciences.”

Building on world-class studies in bioethics developed in Notre Dame’s medical programs over the last decade, the new graduate-entry, one-year Master’s program will offer an innovative, applied approach to developing ethical thinking and decision-making.

Available to graduates from a range of disciplines including medicine, law, nursing, health sciences, philosophy and theology the course aims to enrich our ethical considerations from many perspectives. A multidisciplinary faculty from the schools of Medicine, Philosophy and Theology, and Law as well as from the national Institute for Ethics and Society will teach and supervise students in the degree. Courses will be available online during the COVID-19 crisis and will commence in Semester 2 2020.

Deputy Vice Chancellor and former Dean of Notre Dame’s medical school in Sydney Professor Christine Bennett AO applauded the establishment of the new program.

“More than ever the events of this year - bushfire tragedies, hundred-year floods and now the global COVID-19 pandemic – have highlighted the need for expert critical thinking and ethical decision making in our governments and our health system,” Professor Bennett said.

Dean of Medicine in Fremantle Professor Gervase Chaney noted that, “Bioethics is a critical component of our Doctor of Medicine (MD) program designed to ensure that we best engage and challenge our students - preparing them for their future as medical practitioners. The new Masters in Bioethics will provide an opportunity to further extending their training in ethical decision-making as an essential part of modern health care.”

This program will help meet the growing need for ethics trained health and legal professionals, policy writers and advisors, educators, philosophers and theologians. Integrating several disciplines, co-taught coursework will enable students to grapple with key principles and essential problems that arise within the healthcare setting. Students will also have the opportunity to plan and undertake a supervised research project.

The new program is timely. This year, bioethical issues have become daily news items across the globe. Questions such as who will have access to intensive care units and ventilators, how we should care for our older Australians, and the personal and collective responsibility have become a matter of public discussion and debate. In Australia as elsewhere, health professionals and politicians repeatedly address matters of life and death, both publicly and urgently.



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Central to each new challenge is the value of the human person. The Masters in Bioethics will emphasise that focus on the dignity of human life.

This program will be available in Semester 2 this year. To register your interest visit notredame.edu.au/bioethics.

Media Contact: **Nancy Merlo** +61 2 8204 4044 | **+61 415 517 589** | nancy.merlo@nd.edu.au
Breyon Gibbs +61 8 9443 0596 | **+61 456 626 744** | breyon.gibbs@nd.edu.au

