



# Old Main Chronicle

Division of Humanities, Religion, and Social Sciences

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# Embracing Diversity: Navigating Dialogue Across Difference

**By: Melissa Stevenson**

Christian Ministry Major, McMurry University  
Youth Pastor, First Methodist Church, Abilene, TX  
Oklahoma State University, BSBA Marketing, 2022



Have you ever said, “That is not what I said” or “That is not what I meant”? Perhaps you said these words to a friend, a significant other, a co-worker, a roommate, or even a boss. I am a big fan of Young Adult novels and misapprehension seems to be a favorite plot device. A rumor, a misunderstanding, a secret. It always leads to a conflict that could have been avoided or cleared up completely if people would simply have had a conversation, asked a question, or listened to the other person. But instead, we get 400 pages of angst and drama. You can probably think of a book, TV show, or movie where this is the case. *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, essentially all of Shakespeare. And while this is entertaining for fiction, it’s often avoidable in real life. It can cause hurt, loss, and even violence.

That is what we are learning in the course Dialogue with the Other with Dr. Mark Waters this semester, the skill of having conversations in a productive way and the emphasis that these conversations are important. This is especially true about controversial subjects. So far this semester we have not shied away from dialogues on abortion, universal healthcare, the death penalty, and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Our class is made up of students as different as we can possibly be in terms of age, sex, gender

identity, sexual identity, race, ethnic background, family background, and nationality. But because we have a basic outline of how conversations can be held in a respectful manner, all our opinions, thoughts, feelings, and frankly our baggage, can be expressed in a healthy way. Dialogue with the Other is part of the Servant Leadership curriculum, but one could argue that this class could benefit any major, career, or relationship. Being able to have true and honest discussions about conflicts in the workplace could reduce toxic environments, increase productivity, and reduce anxiety in the office.

One of the most enlightening conversations we had this semester was an offshoot of an original discussion. This happens often and we enjoy the freedom to see where the topic takes us. This specific discussion was about the presidents of Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who were called before Congress to discuss their reactions to whether “[calling for the genocide of Jews](#)” amounted to bullying and harassment on campus.

Our discussion started with background information about the situation including the fact that the freedom of speech clause in the First Amendment is not required of private universities as it is in public universities. This information led to a conversation about what we did agree with and what we did not agree with in the presidents’ testimony and the resulting controversy.

A realization that we have discovered this semester is that most things that happen in the world are not black and white. They are not something that we can specifically pick a side about. In most of our discussions in class, we agree with some aspects of an issue or topic and disagree with other parts. Many Americans would agree with this statement. “I like my job, but I do not like when my company does this....” or “I like my political party, but sometimes they do things that seem problematic, but not all the time.” These realizations are an important part of developing as a human for decision making and for living in a flawed world.

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The part of the class that was the most impactful to me personally was when we led the conversation on how students experience freedom of expression at McMurry University. Had we ever felt like our freedom of speech had been stifled or had we ever felt like we could not speak about a topic frankly and honestly when it was an appropriate time to do so? One classmate talked about an experience where they were in a conflict with a classmate about a topic and the professor told them to drop the subject in order to move on with the class. There was a group in the class that agreed with the professor because we dislike conflict. Our classmate informed us that being told to drop the subject made them feel like their thoughts, feelings, and opinions were dismissed, that they were less in that moment and not important. It was an eye-opening thought. Just by trying to keep the peace, to try to deescalate and keep everyone comfortable, we were dismissing feelings and ultimately people who needed to

have these discussions. It was the other side of the problem that some of us had not seen before. It was a lesson in the necessity of allowing ourselves to feel uncomfortable.

This is the importance of a class like Dialogue with the Other. We improved our skills in speaking appropriately and listening intentionally. While it seems silly to think of a utopian society where everyone gets along, it is not so far out of reach to think that if more individuals had a class like this, it could make the world a better place. This is so needed among current students, alumni, and adults in our community, particularly in our current and upcoming political climate. The days of not speaking of money, religion, and politics at the dinner table is something that needs to be left in the past. The phrase "If you cannot say anything nice, do not say anything at all" is not helping us listen to others when they are hurting or feeling left out of society. But if these things can be done in a polite and respectful way, then we can all live in a better world.



## Celebrating Diversity at SALO: A Feast of Culture and Unity!

**By: Faez Mufti**  
Business Major  
First Year Student from Pakistan

Something great is headed to your way, so mark your calendars for Sunday, April 21st, at 6:00 p.m. The International Student Association (ISA) is delighted to announce SALO, an event that promises to be an occasion of diversity, culture, and unity. SALO, in collaboration with the Better Together Alliance (BTA) and Religious and Spiritual Life (RSL), promises to be a remarkable event that offers opportunities for learning and connecting with one another. SALO is a tagalog word for gathering or feast.

The variety of delicious cuisine from different countries will surely be one of SALO's highlights. Attendees will have the chance to taste a variety of great cuisines from across the globe, ranging from fiery Pakistani/Indian dishes to delicious Nigerian Jollof Rice. Every meal will provide a delightful culinary experience and manifest the diverse cultures that define our community.

SALO will not only attract your taste buds but also encourage you to dance! Prepare yourself to encounter the dynamic liveliness of dance originating

from multiple cultures. With a range of dancing styles, including Indian and African, there surely is something that attracts every individual. Thus, don't be hesitant; take part in the enjoyment and allow the music to soothe you.

There is more! SALO will provide trivia questions and fun activities to challenge anyone and wants to test their knowledge and cultural awareness. Whether you possess extensive knowledge in trivia or just want a pleasant rivalry, these games are certain to provide amusement and enlightenment.

Also, poem enthusiasts will get an opportunity to showcase their passion. They will immerse themselves in the elegance of language and artistic expression via poem recitations in various languages, such as Hindi, Nigerian, Ethiopian, and others. Brace yourself as you will be uplifted by the words of our poets as they express their viewpoints and understandings.

Furthermore, our cultural event includes a fashion runway. Get ready to be amazed as our models

represent their individual countries confidently, showcasing their attires that embody many cultures. The fashion runway will showcase a variety of African fabrics with elaborate designs, as well as the exquisite simplicity of Shalwar Kameez, providing a visually captivating experience.

SALO will primarily demonstrate the magnificence of variety and the power that arises from wholeheartedly

accepting our differences. This serves as a reminder that regardless of our origins, we are all members of the same worldwide community. Join us on April 21st at 6:00 p.m. to honor our individuality and unite in our common humanity. This exciting event will be held in the Mabee Room in the Campus Center. Email Faez Mufti (mufti.faez@mcm.edu) or Dr. Mark Waters (watersm@mcm.edu) by April 15 (preferably before) to let us know you are coming. We need to know how much food to prepare.



## McMurry Serves: Do Good in Your Community this Month *Service as the measure of life...*

**By: Jeff Scott**

Director of Servant Leadership

McMurry Serves is an annual tradition and a volunteer opportunity for McMurry alumni, students, faculty, staff, and families to come together as a community and serve others in Abilene, throughout Texas—and beyond!

No matter where you live, you can continue the tradition of giving back ***throughout the month of April*** by volunteering and doing something good for your community or for those in need.

This year we are excited to have students currently enrolled in Servant Leadership 1310 forming service-learning teams that are planning, organizing, executing, and evaluating a local McMurry Serves event this spring. We invite you to participate or to propose an additional event or one in your own community. [Registering to volunteer is a simple, one-time process.](#) You will receive confirmation once you sign up. On the day of the event, all you need to do is show up and pitch in!

### Opportunities to serve abound:

As summer approaches, our neighbors experiencing homelessness are vulnerable to the elements. Throughout April, we will collect the following items for delivery to the West Texas Homeless Network: sunscreen, bug repellent, water, and cash donations. Look for collection bins at the entrances of the Garrison United Methodist Campus Center, or simply donate funds on the McMurry Serves webpage.

Volunteer for ***the Food Bank of West Central Texas at Rose Park Senior Pantry*** on Thursday, April 4, or Thursday, April 18, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. We will provide companionship and carry out grocery items for Abilene seniors.

Help lead a Field Day and play games in Wilford Moore Stadium with ***McMurry Center for Innovation students*** (the 5th grade classes hosted on campus) on Friday, April 5. We

will meet on the field at 10:00. Stay after and purchase lunch to eat with the kids in the dining hall.

Come out to make the annual **War Hawk Classic Track Meet** a successful event on Friday, April 12 and Saturday, April 13. Volunteers will stage and facilitate various track and field events. Time commitments vary depending on the event, and no previous experience or expertise is necessary.

Serve breakfast and lunch-time meals to neighbors in need at **Love and Care Ministries** on April 16. Volunteers will help prepare food, serve food, have conversations with visitors, clean up, and wash dishes. Volunteers can serve one or both meals and come and go as available.

On April 19 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., participate in Love and Care Ministries' **CarePacks for Kids** program. Volunteers will help assemble 1,700 packs for distribution to students and families served by 10 area school districts.

Keep Abilene Green is from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 21. Volunteers will clean and remove trash from the **Cedar Creek Waterway Trail**. Two groups will start at both ends of the trail, meet in the middle, and celebrate a job well done.

You can also serve during National Crime Victim Rights Week on Saturday, April 27! Volunteer at Beyond Trafficking from 10:00 to 3:00 p.m. to assemble and deliver personal gifts to survivors of human trafficking.

Together these small acts of service will make a significant impact!

## Interdisciplinary Learning

Consistent with institutions of higher education across the country, McMurry has placed a significant emphasis on interdisciplinary learning in *The Second Century* strategic plan. Interdisciplinary collaboration breaks down silos, provides rich opportunities to broaden perspectives, develops real-world problem solving skills, and contributes to McMurry's mission "to examine our complex world from multiple perspectives in preparation for lives of leadership, service, and professional success." As noted in the last newsletter, Dr. Bryan Stewart and Dr. Greg Schneller are currently teaching a course on Faith and Mental Health. Next spring, Dr. Wayne Keith and Dr. Mark Waters will repeat their Faith and Science course that was inaugurated in the spring of 2023. The following two articles provide some insight into the Faith and Science course.

## Faith and Science in the Classroom

**By Dr. Mark Waters**

Professor of Religion

Division Chair: Humanities, Religion, and Social Sciences

In 1931, Belgian cosmologist Georges Lemaître (1894-1966) published two papers, "[The Expanding Universe](#)" and "[The Beginning of the World from the Point of View of Quantum Theory](#)." These short papers resulted in Lemaître's legacy as the "[father of Big Bang cosmology](#)." Lemaître, however, did not use the term "Big Bang." This wording was coined by astronomer Fred Hoyle as a derisive reaction against Lemaître in a [1949 BBC broadcast](#). The previous year, Hoyle and others hypothesized an eternal, "steady state" universe. Before the research of Lemaître, Hoyle, and Sir Edwin Hubble, a majority of cosmologists asserted that the universe was static.

Lemaître's calculations in 1931 and a previous iteration of his work in 1927 demonstrated two claims, (1) the universe is expanding and (2) an expanding universe logically extrapolates back in time to an infinitely small and dense particle that he called a "primeval atom," now understood as [the singularity](#) that began expanding 13.8 billion years ago. Though Hubble was the first to observe physical evidence of the expanding universe in 1929, it was Lemaître (1927) who made the connection between expansion and the initial singularity leading to the claim that the universe had a beginning.

While the idea of an expanding universe was controversial among many in the scientific community, the suggestion that the universe had a beginning was the central point of contention. I have great respect for science and for scientists but, like any of us (including me), they can be so fixed upon an idea that their emotions and preconceptions trump critical thinking. In this case, an objection that some scientists had to the Big Bang theory was not based on scientific analysis but, rather, their fear that positing a beginning to the universe (against eternal static or steady state cosmology) could be used to assert a Creator. This objection could loosely be characterized as [scientism](#), not science.

The Big Bang, however, **is not the key point of this article**. The point in this context is that Lemaître, with a PhD from Catholic University of Louvain and another PhD from MIT, was also a Catholic priest with training in theology. I present him as a hard scientist who, simultaneously, was a person of devout faith. His mentor, Sir Arthur Eddington, was also a Christian and a member of the Society of Friends.

The promise of being a person of faith who affirms modern science led McMurry's astrophysicist, Dr. Wayne Keith, and me to offer a course last spring entitled Faith and Science. We enjoyed co-teaching, co-learning, and especially curious and engaged students. A sampling of our topics included Big Bang, evolution by natural selection, the two conflicting creation stories in Genesis, brain/consciousness, the nature of time, God of the gaps, theodicy, free will/determinism/compatibilism, God's action in the world, and more.

We used the late [Ian Barbour](#)'s typology for analyzing interactions between each scientific theory alongside interpretations of scripture and faith. The typology includes [four models](#): conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration.

Barbour's models are somewhat self-explanatory. Conflict, clearly, refers to conflict between faith and science. Independence means that faith and science are two separate fields of inquiry utilizing different kinds of questions and share no meaningful relationship. Each can be true within its own arena. The famous paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould called independence "Nonoverlapping Magisteria." Dialogue, the third model, is about learning from one another and understanding each other. Understanding the other may lead to reframed perspectives on either side or, at least, not stereotyping or demonizing the other based on misunderstanding. Mutual understanding, with or without agreement, is crucial. In class, the core concern that a few students

expressed about Darwin's theory of evolution was their misunderstanding that it asserts that humans came from monkeys. Instead, the theory demonstrates that humans and monkeys had a common ancestor in the distant past. Finally, integration refers to integrating specific elements of faith and science into a larger whole. [Theistic evolution](#), though open to various interpretations and iterations, can be an example of integration. Theistic evolution is decidedly not the same as creation science or intelligent design, which most scientists and serious theologians consider to be pseudoscience.

While many of us will find that one or two of Barbour's four models appeal to us more than the others, I suggest that being "stuck" on any one of these models is short-sighted and lacks critical thinking. Except for extremely highly specialized scholars trained in both science and theology (a surprisingly high number over time at Oxford and Cambridge), no single individual knows enough about every aspect of a particular scientific theory and, simultaneously, the complex intricacies of theology and biblical studies in an area related to that theory, to make declarative statements without first conducting significant background work. Actually, the whole career of the aforementioned dual-specialists involves consistent background work in both fields. Those of us who are not specialists in both science and theology (or either) have to discern conflict, independence, or integration through research and critical thinking at each juncture in the road. This process has to incorporate dialogue, whether in-person or accomplished through research within and outside of one's own specialty. Rigorous study, dialogue, and reflection are the only way to affirm or deny any of these models in a specific case. This is why a course in faith and science should be co-taught by a scientist and a theologian.

In class, Dr. Keith and I try to provide sufficient scientific and theological information on each topic to equip students to make their own decisions. We encourage students through discussion and targeted assignments to respond in ways that reflect conflict, independence, dialogue, or integration, or some combination of at least two of these, with reference to each theory addressed. We do not tell students what to think, but we do unapologetically seek to provide current scholarly information to help them to think broadly and critically.

In other words, we all have to do our homework rather than blindly stereotyping the "other" and their thinking. Michael Ruse, a philosopher of evolutionary biology, respectfully denies belief in God, but also rejects the simplistic thinking and toxic approach of the so-called "[New Atheists](#)." Ruse states that

Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, would “fail any introductory philosophy or religion course.” Dawkins, professor emeritus of evolutionary biology at Oxford, is clearly smart within his own field, but he does not understand or utilize basic logic well enough to avoid ongoing logical fallacies when making his case against religion. In addition, he rejects philosophy and theology as legitimate areas of study, thus presupposing conflict before engaging or understanding. Of course there are people of faith, whether religious scholars or not, who are guilty of this same kind ideological thinking from the opposite

extreme. Fundamentalism is to religion what scientism is to science.

As readers know, one can find an overabundance of dubious, even false claims on the internet about science, theology, and their interactions. Anyone wishing to learn more about the intersection of faith and science that represents legitimate scholarly perspectives in both specialties may want to start with [The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences](#) or [BioLogos](#) (founded by Francis Collins, a prominent scientist and lay Christian who played a pivotal role in sequencing and mapping the human genome).



## The Intersection of Science and Faith in Our Conceptions of Time

By: Dr. Wayne Keith  
Professor of Physics

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The first verse of Genesis already has a lot to unpack regarding time. Creation, and time itself, appears to have a beginning, but God must have already existed in order to begin the process of creation, and so He must exist outside of time. On the other hand, Psalm 90:2 says that, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” If this was before the beginning of creation, then there must have been time before creation in order for “before” to have any meaning. This implies that God experiences time; that is, He is temporal.

These and other Scriptures have led biblical scholars and theologians to develop two primary ways of thinking about time: eternalism and presentism. In eternalism, the past, present, and future all exist together. Material objects exist through time just as they do through three-dimensional space. In this conception, God is typically said to exist outside of time, being able to see all temporal events together as we might see a row of objects in a room. This view has obvious implications for our free will. If the future is already written, what choices do we really have? Presentism, on the other hand, holds that only the present moment actually exists. This view doesn’t necessarily deny that God can have knowledge of the past and the future. After all, WE have knowledge of the past, even though it doesn’t exist for us anymore. One relatively modern view, Open and Relational Theology holds that while God can know all of the

possible futures, future events are not set until they actually happen in the present.

Now, let’s compare these theological conceptions of time to modern science. Modern cosmology, as understood by the majority of scientists who study it, holds that the Universe began with the rapid expansion of a singularity, commonly called the “Big Bang,” and that time and space continue to expand out from this beginning. When Albert Einstein published his famous theories of relativity in 1905 and 1916, he introduced the concept of the relativity of simultaneity. That is, two spatially separated events, which are simultaneous in one frame of reference, will NOT be simultaneous in any other inertial frame (an inertial frame being a reference frame that is moving with constant velocity relative to the original frame). If people in these two reference frames can’t agree whether two events happened at the same moment or not, how can they ever agree on when the “present” is? This lack of a universal “present” led Einstein to believe in block time, that the past, present, and future all exist together in a four-dimensional block, and that the future is already set. In fact, he called the distinction between past, present, and future “only a stubbornly persistent illusion.” This is an inherently deterministic idea – future states are determined by previous states of affairs, presumably going all the way back to the beginning of time.

But wait! Quantum mechanics says that everything is governed by probabilities, and that we can’t know to arbitrary precision the position and velocity of a



particle (from Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle), and therefore the future can’t be entirely deterministic. If these small things, like the trajectory of a particle or the decay of an atomic nucleus can’t be determined from previous states, then the future ISN’T already written and doesn’t exist until the present moment. Thus, modern science includes a moment of creation and can be interpreted to support eternalism or presentism, just as in theology.

The convergence of eternalism/determinism/block time and that of presentism/free will/uncertainty in theology and science is an example of an interaction that Ian Barbour would call “integration.” Whether an individual subscribes to eternalism or presentism, they can find support for it with theological AND scientific arguments that are surprisingly consistent. Many other topics, of course, do not so easily mesh, which is why

Barbour created the other three models of “conflict,” “independence,” and “dialogue.” It may not be the most sophisticated system for modeling science and faith interactions, but it’s certainly useful and often a good place to start.

When Dr. Mark Waters and I embarked on creating a new course on science and faith, we chose Ian Barbour’s models as a basic framework and premise in the class for their simplicity and clarity. It is pretty easy to find examples of all four interactions in history and popular culture, but while preparing and delivering the course for the first time last spring I was struck by how well the different conceptions of time integrated as seen above. Perhaps if people were to spend more time looking for points of integration and dialogue, rather than points of conflict, the popular conception of faith and science as being polar opposites would not be quite so popular.



## McMurry Faculty and Students to Attend Social Sciences Conference

**By: Dr. Jori Sechrist, '01**  
 Professor of Sociology  
 Department Head: Sociology and Criminology

The annual meeting of the Southwest Social Sciences Association (SSSA) will be April 17-20 in New Orleans, LA, and McMurry University will be well represented at this meeting. The SSSA is an interdisciplinary regional association of which the sociology affiliate is the largest affiliate. McMurry faculty and students have been frequent attendees for many years.

Dr. Robert Wallace has held numerous leadership positions within the association and is currently serving in the role of past president of the sociology executive council. Dr. Jori Sechrist '01 is serving as the president elect of the sociology executive council and in that capacity was the program chair, organizing the review, acceptance, and scheduling of all of the sociology sessions for the upcoming meeting.

Not only are McMurry faculty a part of the leadership in the association, McMurry faculty, students, and alumni are presenting at the conference. Dr. Jerry Hollingsworth will be discussing his research from his book *America’s Third World Society*. Dr. David Wahl

is presenting his research examining sexual self-development. Dr. Jori Sechrist along with McMurry sociology junior, Lydianna Bradford, and Hendrix College freshman, Britton Sechrist, will present their paper examining the link between identity and music choice. Dr. Robert Wallace and Dr. Rosemary Wallace (Director of the McMurry-Dyess AFB Program) will serve as session chairs in sociology sessions.

Quintin Gorman, a 2018 McMurry graduate, is also presenting at the meeting. Mr. Gorman’s presentation at the SSSA will focus on how social class shapes black adult’s political activities. Currently, Mr. Gorman is pursuing a PhD at Rice University. He is a 2023 recipient of the American Sociological Association (ASA) Minority Fellowship, a highly competitive award that supports a small cohort of minority scholars as they complete their dissertation work. Mr. Gorman spoke about the ASA Minority Fellowship to assist with the Southwestern Sociology Affiliate’s fundraising campaign supporting the Fellowship Program-[take a listen to that here.](#)



## A Gathering of Orthodox Theologians

**By: Dr. Philip LeMasters**

Professor of Religion

Director of the McMurry Honors Program

It was my good fortune to participate in a meeting of the International Association of Orthodox Dogmatic Theologians in Paralimni, Cyprus, from March 5-7, 2024. I joined the organization several years ago, but this is the first post-pandemic meeting of the group and the first in which I participated. It is important to note that the word “Dogmatic” in the name of the organization does not mean “closeminded” or “fundamentalist,” but instead refers to how the members think within the context of the most basic doctrinal affirmations of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, such as belief in God as the Holy Trinity and in Jesus Christ as one person with two natures, being fully divine and fully human.

I was the only American participating in this meeting of the organization, which included scholars from Greece, Romania, Macedonia, Lebanon, Bulgaria, and Cyprus. The theme of the conference concerned the human being in the image of God, and my presentation focused on how Orthodox Christianity may understand the “one flesh” union of man and woman in marriage as being in the image of the Trinity, an eternal communion of persons united in love. While the teachers of early Christianity did not speak explicitly of marriage in this way, my presentation built upon the analysis of Vigen Guroian, a contemporary Orthodox theological ethicist, who has noted that St. John Chrysostom referred to marital union as an image of God. Since Chrysostom affirmed belief in the Trinity, I argued that the implication of seeing marriage in this Trinitarian way is clear. My paper also responded to certain objections raised against Guroian’s interpretation and concluded with brief reflections on how these considerations may inform an Orthodox understanding of gender.

Most of the other papers focused on clarifying how various teachers of the early church understood what it means for people to be in the image of God, while some addressed matters ranging from artificial intelligence to genetics in relation to the theme of the conference.

After the conclusion of the meeting, my wife Paige joined me for a week’s vacation in Cyprus during Spring Break. The island has a rich history with archaeological sites from ancient Greece and Rome through the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. We visited Salamis and Paphos, where the apostles Paul and Barnabas proclaimed Christianity (Acts 13:4-13). Turkey invaded and occupied the northern third of the island in 1974 and continues to administer it through a state recognized only by Turkey. The Republic of Cyprus, which administers the rest of the island and claims sovereignty over the entire country, is Greek in language and culture and a member of the European Union. In touring both areas of Cyprus, we had excellent guides who gave us a broad exposure to the history, culture, and current circumstances of the people living in both sections. Participating in the conference and touring Cyprus were both enriching experiences upon which I will draw in my teaching and future scholarship. I am thankful for the support provided for this trip by the Drew-McDougal Endowment in Religion and McMurry’s faculty development funds.



# The IRB: Your Research Project May Require Review in Advance

**By: David W. Wahl, Ph.D., ABS**  
Assistant Professor of Sociology and Criminology  
Chair: Institutional Review Board

It is with sincere honor, pride, and a tremendous sense of personal responsibility that I accepted the appointment of chair of the Internal Review Board (IRB) in October. The IRB serves to ensure ethical research practices and the protection of the wellbeing of all participants in academic research. This responsibility is upheld through compliance with federal regulations and McMurry institutional policies, while fostering a culture of respect and integrity. The work and goals of the IRB reside in firm adherence to McMurry's core values of Christian faith as a foundation of life, personal relationships as a catalyst for life, learning as the journey of life, excellence as the goal of life, and service as the measure of life. In this spirit, I am taking this time to remind everyone of a few essential aspects of the IRB.

All too often when considering the IRB, people gravitate toward the idea that the IRB's purpose is to protect the wellbeing of research participants in human subject studies. While this is true, it is not the only protection offered by the IRB. Apart from insuring the wellbeing of human subjects, the IRB also works to (1) guarantee the protection of animals used in research, (2) protect the integrity of the institution wherein the research is based, and finally, (3) perhaps the most unfamiliar protection of the IRB, is for the safety of the researchers themselves.

To fulfill our commitment to ethically-sound research, we continually engage in training, education, and support initiatives. We are now partnered with the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and will be launching the program shortly on campus. Such efforts are directed at researchers and IRB members alike. We work toward educating researchers on regulatory requirements, ethical standards, and best practices in research, while guiding them through the complexities of the IRB review process.

The IRB values diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are committed to acknowledging diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds for all involved in the research environment. Recognizing fairness and equity through cultural sensitivity is a cornerstone of the IRB.

Finally, the IRB is committed to adapting to the ever-changing landscape of research and ethics. Like all facets of the academic institution, the IRB recognizes its need to evolve in conjunction with emerging technologies and methodologies. To address changing dynamics, the IRB engages in continuous self-assessment for ongoing improvements in its structure.

The IRB has a steadfast commitment in fostering a culture that is founded on sound ethical practices, transparency, accountability, and collaboration. This is fundamental in contributing to the greater good of the research, our campus, the broader community, and humanity.

I am always available if anyone has questions or wishes to discuss the future of the IRB on McMurry Campus.



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