

University Bulletin 4.21.20

Subject: Special Bulletin: Father Dave Announces “Step in Faith”

Dear Faculty and Staff,

Peace and Blessings!

Thank you to all who responded to my request for creative, Spirit-inspired ideas for addressing the challenges Franciscan University now faces due to the coronavirus pandemic.

I am happy to announce that one of them—the idea of using some of the University’s reserves to cover tuition costs—was approved by the Board of Trustees on Saturday as the Step in Faith COVID-19 response plan (see the University’s [news release here](#)).

This idea was not what I was expecting, but after discernment and discussion, it seemed like an excellent way to provide for new students and their families, many of whom are now hesitant to commit to on-campus higher education, as well as our returning students and the Class of 2020.

For all new full-time on-campus undergraduate students (freshmen and transfers), Step in Faith will cover 100 percent of tuition after scholarships and grants for the fall 2020 semester.

For returning students, Step in Faith provides every returning full-time undergraduate student with an extra \$1,000.

Step in Faith also provides any returning full-time undergraduate student who wishes to pursue a master’s degree at Franciscan with one semester (12 credit hours) of free tuition coverage toward any one of Franciscan’s 11 graduate degree programs (online or on campus, following application and acceptance into the program). Students may use this graduate studies tuition coverage all in one semester or over the next five years as convenient for them.

In addition, through Step in Faith, the University has earmarked a special financial aid fund to assist returning full-time undergraduate students who have experienced significant financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I don’t want money to stand in the way of any of them being able to return this fall.

For our graduating Class of 2020, Step in Faith provides every graduating bachelor’s degree student who was enrolled in spring 2020 with \$500. In addition, those graduating students who wish to pursue a master’s degree at Franciscan will receive one semester (12 credit hours) of free tuition coverage toward any one of Franciscan’s 11 graduate degree programs (online or on campus, following application and acceptance into the program). Like our returning students, the Class of 2020 may use this graduate studies tuition coverage all in one semester or over the next five years as convenient for them.

Providing this level of financial assistance is a step in faith for Franciscan. Not because we wouldn’t love to give more aid every year, but because, as you know, our resources must cover so many competing needs. Because of the pandemic, we will need to defer some other plans and projects this year so we can use far more of our reserves toward this enhanced financial aid.

But we're also inviting families for whom tuition payments are not a hardship—as well as other generous benefactors—to contribute to the Step in Faith Fund, which will help us provide financial aid for those in greater need.

St. Francis of Assisi had a deep concern for those in need, and as a Franciscan University, we strive to follow his example in caring for those entrusted to us. I hope and pray that our Step in Faith plan will allow every one of our students to return to campus in peace and joy.

I also want to assure you there is no change in our benefits, compensation, and staffing levels at this time, and the University will continue to pay everyone regardless of their level of engagement. We will re-evaluate this decision on an ongoing basis. Our hope continues to be to maintain compensation, benefits, and staffing at their current levels throughout this crisis, if possible. Should things change, we will communicate with you in a timely manner.

Thank you for your prayers, ideas, and ongoing commitment to the mission of Franciscan University. May the Lord bless us and unite us again soon.

Peace,
Father Dave

Father Dave Pivonka, TOR
President
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