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Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, N.J., speaks at St. Lucy's Church in Newark Jan. 13, 2025, during an interfaith gathering of religious leaders committed to supporting immigrants facing the threat of mass deportation by the incoming Trump administration. The event was co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of Newark and Faith in Action, an international faith-based organizing network. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

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Newark, New Jersey — February 11, 2025

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Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey announced he has engaged a law firm to investigate whether the current president of Seton Hall University, Msgr. Joseph R. Reilly, "acted appropriately" regarding disgraced former cardinal Theodore McCarrick.

Reilly, a Seton Hall graduate who was named president in April 2024, was appointed rector of the school's College Seminary at St. Andrew's Hall in 2002, and from 2012 to 2022 served as rector and dean of the university's Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology.

The now laicized McCarrick, who was archbishop of Newark from 1986-2000, has been the subject of sexual abuse allegations spanning the decades of his high-profile clerical career.

In November 2020, the Vatican issued a 461-page report on the Holy See's "institutional knowledge and decision-making" regarding the influential former prelate.

In a Feb. 10 statement, Tobin said he had retained the global practice Ropes & Gray LLP to "conduct a comprehensive third-party review of the facts" regarding previous university investigations into McCarrick.

OSV News has contacted Seton Hall University for comment on Tobin's announcement and is awaiting a response.

In August 2019, Seton Hall announced that following credible allegations of McCarrick's sexual harassment of seminarians between 1986 and 2000, two law firms — Gibbons P.C. and Latham & Watkins — it had undertaken "an independent, unrestricted review" of the matter in 2018.

Seton Hall said in its August 2019 statement that "the Latham & Watkins review found that McCarrick created a culture of fear and intimidation that supported his personal objectives.

"McCarrick used his position of power as then-Archbishop of Newark to sexually harass seminarians," the university said in that statement. "No minors or other University students were determined to have been affected by McCarrick."

While the specific findings of the university's inquiries remained confidential "pursuant to Title IX regulations and Seton Hall University policies," the school said in August 2019 that it had shared the reviews with "appropriate university personnel and law enforcement."

In addition, the results were shared with the Holy See, as the Vatican report on McCarrick noted, stating that the university had "identified 'inappropriate conduct by McCarrick when he was Archbishop of Newark, including the sharing of beds with seminarians" at a beach house.

However, the university's investigation "found no evidence that McCarrick made sexual advances while in bed with seminarians, or engaged in any sexual contact with anyone on the campus of Seton Hall University," the Vatican said in its report.

In its August 2019 statement, Seton Hall said its review indicated that the university's Title IX policies "are consistent with state and federal law," although the policies "were not always followed" at Immaculate Conception and St. Andrew, "which resulted in incidents of sexual harassment going unreported to the University."

As of August 2019, the university and its two seminaries were "fully compliant with all Title IX requirements," said the school in its statement at the time.

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One former seminarian had described McCarrick inappropriately touching him in the presence of other seminarians at the beach, according to the Vatican's citation of the Seton Hall investigation.

According to the 2020 Vatican report, the Seton Hall investigation "determined that while the sharing of beds with seminarians had been known among seminary staff and administrators, no complaint of sexual assault or harassment was ever received by anyone at Seton Hall and no action was taken to curb the practice at the time, in part because it was understood to be non-sexual and consensual."

The Vatican report also stated that as part of its own investigation, the university's acting general counsel was interviewed regarding both the "investigative methodology and the results" of Seton Hall's inquiry.

But Tobin said in his Feb. 10 statement that "questions have been raised" about the university's reports on the matter.

"In those reports, there are references to Monsignor Joseph Reilly, who was appointed President of Seton Hall by the Board of Regents in 2024," Tobin said. "Questions have been raised about whether Monsignor Reilly acted appropriately."

Tobin, who serves as both president of the school's board of regents and chair of its board of trustees, said that the Ropes & Gray report will assess "how the findings of these reports relate to Monsignor Joseph Reilly, including whether they were communicated to any and all appropriate personnel at the Archdiocese and Seton Hall University and Monsignor Reilly, and if so, by what means and by whom."

The new review "will have the full cooperation of the Board of Regents and Seton Hall University," Tobin said.

"I have not placed a timetable on this review by Ropes & Gray, nor have I restricted the firm from exploring any relevant facts or avenue of investigation," he said. "A transparent review of the facts will best serve the interests of all involved and of those who have voiced a call for it."

Seton Hall has faced several leadership challenges in recent years.

Reilly took over as president of the university from interim president Katia Passerini, who was named in July 2023 after the sudden departure of Seton Hall president Joseph Nyre.

Nyre and his wife, Kelli, filed suit against the school in 2024, claiming the former chairman of the university's board of regents, Kevin H. Marino, had harassed and

intimidated them.

In December 2022, Nyre and Marino issued a joint email to the university community advising that an independent review had found "a small number of trusted, long-time employees of Seton Hall Law" had over several years "misappropriated funds of the school in excess of \$975,000."

In a February 2024 statement, Laurie A. Pine, a Seton Hall spokeswoman, said, "The claims in this filing are completely without merit, and we intend to vigorously contest them."