



PULTE INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT
KEOUGH SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS



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A student in Senegal engages in the Ndaw Wune Vacances (NWV) foundational skills program. (Credit: ARED)



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MISSION

The Pulte Institute generates knowledge, transforms evidence into action, and equips the next generation of changemakers to eliminate global poverty, reduce inequality, and ensure sustainability.

VISION

A just world free of poverty through the mutual flourishing of people and planet.

Director's Letter

Dear Friends,

A year ago I wrote to you from an organization in transition, navigating the abrupt loss of \$20 million in USAID funding, two-thirds of our team, and dozens of projects across the Global South. Today, I am writing from a place of far greater stability. While the field of global development remains in flux, the Pulte Institute's identity is clear. We've spent this past year asking ourselves not only, "Who are we?" but perhaps more importantly, "Who does the world need us to be?" Who do we need to be for the hundreds of millions living in extreme poverty across the globe? For our partners, who work tirelessly to deliver and scale much needed interventions in their communities? For our funders, who seek the greatest possible impact in the fight to end global poverty?



The Pulte Institute is a special place. Amidst organizations engaged in global development and poverty research, we have always been unique for three reasons. One, our connection to the University of Notre Dame and Catholic social teaching grounds our work in a belief in the fundamental dignity of each person and the value of approaching our work through the lens of integral human development. Two, our ability to blend world-class scholarship with seasoned practitioners ensures we can work in some of the world's most challenging settings to tackle the most intractable problems. And three, our partnerships are real. We deeply value contextual knowledge, diverse perspectives, and the role that partners play in driving discovery and creating lasting change. These features also enable us to shape the next generation of scholars and practitioners, preparing them to answer that same question—*who do I need to be?*

This year, the spirit of partnership has pushed us, as our Provost says, to think even more like an institution by bolstering our collaborations within the Keough School and across campus. Some of the most exciting news this year has been our merger with the Building Inclusive Growth (BIG) Lab, deepening our number of development economists with new faculty largely from the Department of Economics. To advance the flourishing of people and the planet, Pulte has reinforced its role within the strategic objectives of not just the Keough School, but of Notre Dame's broader strategic framework and its poverty and just sustainability initiatives. All of this positions Notre Dame more strongly than ever to lead by leveraging the capacity of the Pulte Institute, its partners, global networks, and the broad reach of the Catholic Church.

This annual review presents **how we work in the defense of human dignity, pursue rigorous evidence, and sustain partnerships with those committed to both.** In the following pages, you will find stories of how our faculty, staff, students, and partners have collaborated to achieve impact across a remarkable variety of fields. I also encourage you to read about the critical contributions made by Pulte's early career researchers—these inspiring stories from that next generation are highlighted throughout the report.

If there is another theme that emerged for me during the soul-searching of these past eighteen months, it is gratitude. I am grateful for the Pulte Family Charitable Foundation and our other faithful benefactors, whose support carried us through the most difficult moments in the Institute's history and whose generosity makes the next chapter possible. I am grateful for our affiliated faculty, who have continued to publish, teach, and engage when the path forward was anything but clear. And I am grateful for all of you, who have stayed with us and who continue to believe that evidence in service of dignity is a worthy and necessary good.

In Notre Dame,



Tracy Kijewski-Correa, William J. Pulte Director

Professor of Global Affairs and Frank M. Freimann Professor
of Structural Engineering and Hazard Resilience





"...every human life
possesses an inviolable
dignity and [safeguarding]
this dignity must be the
foundation of every decision
we make..."

Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C.
President
University of Notre Dame

A Recommitment to Human Dignity



The belief that every person possesses an inherent dignity that no condition of poverty can diminish is at the center of Pulte's work, regardless of sector or scope. In his *Magnifica Humanitas* encyclical this year, Pope Leo XIV called each generation to the task of "...guiding history to become a place where the dignity of every person is safeguarded." The Pulte Institute exists to realize that task through the broad expertise of our faculty, staff, partners, and the evidence we generate to eliminate poverty in all its forms.



"...[Pope Leo] reasserts that we cannot be measured solely by technological acceleration but by holistic human development, human dignity and our commitment to the common good."

Rev. Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C.
Vice President and Associate
Provost for Undergraduate
Education

This year was marked by major commitments to the study and application of dignity in development. Nowhere is this more evident than through the work of Pulte affiliate and Associate Professor of the Practice Paul Perrin, who has engaged undergraduates via our Global Development Scholars program and Master of Global Affairs (MGA) students in the Keough School's Integration Lab (i-Lab), written a seminal article in the top development journal, and spearheaded a new collaboration with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) that aims to examine the long-term implications of putting dignity into practice across 18 projects in as many countries.

Pulte sets itself apart as an organization that not only emphasizes the importance of dignity, but demonstrates what it looks like in practice. In March, the launch of the Global Alliance for Laudato Si' brought Pulte

Family Professor Arun Agrawal and the University's [Just Transformations to Sustainability \(JTS\) Initiative](#) into a global partnership that places human dignity at the center of the call to care for our common home—a call that echoes throughout Pulte's work.



"[Focusing] on the common [good]—on the community of which we are all a part—is a characteristic feature of what it means to be human, to be part of the interconnectedness of all creation."

Arun Agrawal
Director, JTS

MAKING DIGNITY MEASURABLE

Paul Perrin identifies concrete practices to support dignity in development and mentors students to operationalize dignity in their work

How do those with good intentions end up violating dignity? In his research this year, Pulte affiliate Paul Perrin, Associate Professor of the Practice in Global Affairs and Global Health, identified 13 "benevolent indignities" that emerge in development organizations, not from malice but from common dynamics and systems inside institutions themselves. Recognizing that these indignities occur, such as by reducing people's identity to a single label or imposing program values over local priorities, and taking steps to address them offers institutions a pathway for

operationalizing integral human development and honoring dignity in a very real way. Drawing on earlier work with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Perrin also developed a dignity assurance framework that calls on organizations to define and embed dignity in their work.

This year, Perrin partnered with CRS to begin examining the long-term impact of their Advance Local Leadership in the Right Way (ALLRight) Fund, a global program that seeks to “intensify and catalyze investment in partner capacity strengthening for local leadership” in 18 countries across the Global South. Perrin’s contributions will strengthen CRS’s toolkit for dignified partnership, generate evidence to improve programming across ALLRight Fund contexts, and add new clarity to the broader discussion of dignity in development around the globe.



Professor Perrin leads a workshop in Ethiopia with partners in the CRS ALLRight Fund evaluation.

Guiding the Next Generation of Practitioners

Developing every student’s understanding of the importance of dignity in development is a critical part of Pulte’s mission. This year, our second cohort of undergraduate Global Development Scholars worked with faculty mentors on housing recovery in Haiti, education in Uganda, and the promotion of dignity in poverty reduction initiatives. Leticia Queiroz, a graduating senior and a Global

Development Scholar, noted that while the research experience was formative, reflections led by Professor Perrin provided critical perspective. “Small actions, even well-intentioned ones, can reinforce inequality,” Queiroz said. “We are quick to assume what someone needs and step in without fully understanding their context, imagining that our solutions—all so very well-designed—don’t require local input.”

Professor Perrin is also the Academic Director of the Integration Lab (i-Lab), where he guides Master of Global Affairs (MGA) students on their yearlong consultancy projects with partners around the world. This summer, he and other



Professor Perrin leads a session in the Keough School’s Integration Lab (i-Lab).

Pulte affiliated faculty—Isaac Mbiti, TJ D’Agostino, and Patrizio Piraino—supported teams in the field as they implemented projects in partnership with international organizations and local NGOs. Omar Cham, MGA ’26, reflected on his i-Lab experience. “Professor Perrin not only equipped us with the skills to conduct rigorous research, but also ensured that our work reinforced dignity, ethical standards, and cultural sensitivity. He shared real-world experiences with partners, facilitated role-playing exercises, and encouraged honest reflections that exposed the nuances of conducting research while respecting the humanity and lived realities of participants.”



“We attract some of the most talented young people in the world and incur an obligation to challenge them.”

Notre Dame
Strategic Framework



Patrizio Piraino, Professor of Education, Labor, and Development, meets with MGA students and local partners in Indonesia.

A GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR DIGNITY AND INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

Notre Dame's JTS Initiative and the Vatican's Laudato Si' Center launched a worldwide network linking science, faith, and sustainability

Grounded in the best available science and foundational ideas of integral ecology, Notre Dame's [Just Transformations to Sustainability \(JTS\) Initiative](#) translates sustainability research and education into transformative global action. In March 2026, the JTS Initiative partnered with the Vatican's Laudato Si' Center for Higher Education to launch the Global Alliance for Laudato Si', which aims to advance integral ecology and global sustainability. Nearly 100 researchers from more than 60 universities gathered for the inaugural convening in Rome.

Pulte affiliate Arun Agrawal, the Pulte Family Professor of Development Policy at the Keough School and founding director of the JTS Initiative, spoke to the ability of the University to meet this moment: **"Notre Dame, as a leading Catholic research university, is uniquely positioned to assist the Holy See in realizing transformative change** in a manner consistent with scientific evidence and the tenets of integral ecology and integral human development."

The alliance will pursue three goals: (1) form a global network of sustainability leaders, (2) build thematic working groups for research plans and curricula, and (3) strengthen Catholic contributions to the dialogue on international sustainability.



"...we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

Pope Francis
(Laudato Si', 49)



Left: Arun Agrawal, founding director of Notre Dame's JTS Initiative (left), with Cardinal Fabio Baggio, director general of the Laudato Si' Center for Higher Education (right). Center: The Laudato Si' Village gardens in Castel Gandolfo, the pontifical summer residence outside of Rome. Right: University of Notre Dame President Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C., celebrates Mass with Cardinal Fabio Baggio, director general of the Laudato Si' Center for Higher Education, undersecretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and one of the founders of the Global Alliance. (Credit: Alessandro Sgarito)

Evidence Generation: What Works



31 active projects



in **21** countries



\$4m in grants

More than ever, understanding what works and where limited dollars can achieve the maximum impact is paramount. The diversity and depth of expertise at the Pulte Institute allows us to generate evidence across traditionally siloed disciplines and bring that evidence to bear on poverty in all its forms. This structure—broad but deep expertise that leverages partnerships and global networks to achieve impact—reflects the complex and interdependent nature of the real-world problems we are trying to solve. Just as poverty cannot be overcome by approaching the many facets of well-being and dignity in isolation, solutions must account for the environmental, social, and economic factors which transcend disciplines.

Pulte's 17 affiliated faculty possess expertise in nearly as many fields, and their work is compounded through a growing team of Post-Doctoral and Pre-Doctoral scholars, dozens of undergraduate research assistants, and 94 active partnerships across 21 countries. The addition of the Building Inclusive Growth (BIG) Lab only bolsters this capacity: bringing the expertise of eight additional development economists alongside faculty working at the frontlines of education, energy, agriculture, migration, governance, and more.

In the next chapter of development, a key question is how to continue bringing evidence to the places that need it. Although the platforms for deliberating and delivering interventions are still being reimagined post-USAID, the evidence Pulte generates reaches the world through publication in leading journals, global convenings, and in direct conversation with leaders across government, industry, and philanthropy. Pulte also collaborates with the wider Keough School in creating venues to discuss the future of development. This year, Pulte colleagues engaged on campus with respected voices such as President of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), David Miliband, and former USAID Administrator and US Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power. These two visits are emblematic of the Keough School's growing stature as a thought leader in global development.



Top: David Miliband. Bottom: Samantha Power(R) with Tracy Kijewski-Correa (L)

ALIGNED FOR IMPACT: PULTE, KEOUGH, AND NOTRE DAME

The process of reaffirming Pulte's identity has also provided the opportunity to align the Institute's work more intentionally with the strategic objectives of the Keough School of Global Affairs and the University

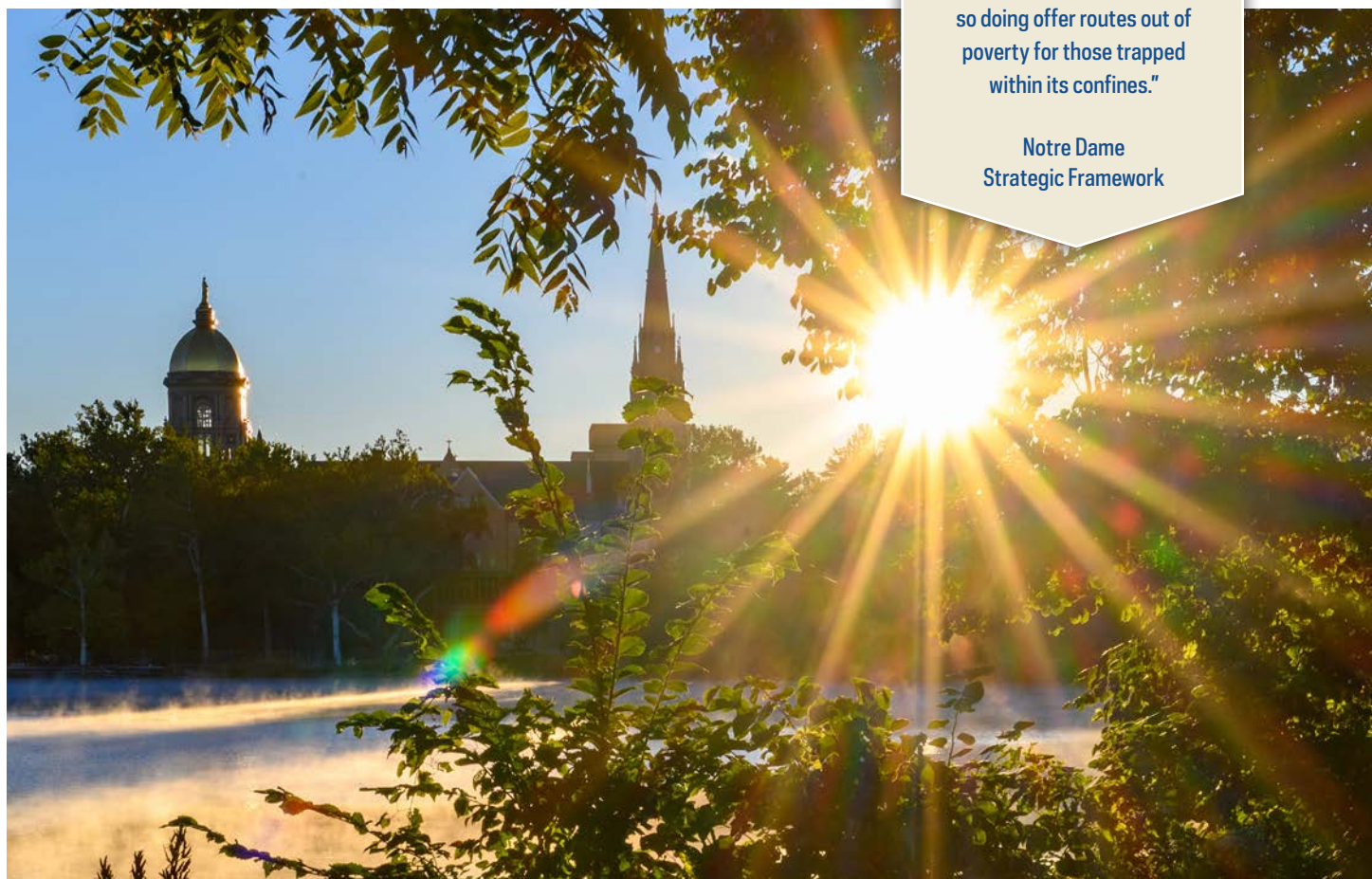
Pulte generates evidence under two interrelated Global Research Agendas: Poverty and Sustainability. In turn, these contribute to the Keough School's programs on Poverty, Inequality, and Marginalization (PIM) and Sustainability and Environmental Justice (SEJ), and reinforce campus-wide efforts to advance the University's Strategic Framework—in particular the Poverty Initiative and the Just Transformations to Sustainability (JTS) Initiative.

Additionally, Pulte-affiliated faculty and staff are making substantive contributions to Notre Dame's other strategic initiatives focused on democracy, data, and ethics, highlighting how the evidence we generate is feeding these larger discovery ecosystems at Notre Dame.



"The overarching goal is bold: to make Notre Dame one of the best places in the world to understand the seemingly intractable problems of poverty, and in so doing offer routes out of poverty for those trapped within its confines."

**Notre Dame
Strategic Framework**



DATA, DEMOCRACY, AND ETHICS

Pulte experts are engaged in projects and research across data, democracy, and ethics to advance a more resilient and equitable future

The Ethics of a Green Future

This year, Pulte affiliate Emily Grubert, Associate Professor of Sustainable Energy Policy, was named a Program Chair at the Institute for Ethics and the Common Good (the hub anchoring Notre Dame's [Ethics Initiative](#)). In that role, she is co-developing a research program on the ethics of decarbonization, examining how the hard choices involved in moving off fossil fuels can be made in ways that are fair to the workers and communities most exposed during the transition. In January, Grubert and Pulte Post-Doctoral scholar Joshua Lappen published a Policy Forum article in *Science*, later amplified by coverage in the media, emphasizing the scale and vulnerability of our fossil-fueled energy systems and the populations that depend on them.



EARLY RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

Joshua Lappen

Pulte-affiliated Post-Doctoral Scholar

Josh Lappen is a historian and engineer who studies how energy networks shape and are shaped by local landscapes and political institutions. Reflecting on the necessity for greater attention to fossil fuel transitions, Lappen said: "None of our profit-driven, fossil-fueled energy systems were designed with their own obsolescence in mind. Their designers never imagined gradually and safely handing off to other systems, which makes our moment in history incredibly important. **We need to be responsible stewards to ensure not just a rapid, just transition to clean energy systems, but also that the communities who depend on fossil systems aren't left stranded.**"

Harnessing Data to Build Resilience and Respond to Crises

William J. Pulte Director of the Pulte Institute Tracy Kijewski-Correa, Professor of Global Affairs and the Frank M. Freimann Professor of Structural Engineering and Hazard Resilience, sits on the [Data, AI, and Computing Initiative's](#) working group examining how machine learning can be applied to open-source imagery and sensing data to guide the development of more resilient, sustainable, and livable communities. In February, Kijewski-Correa was among a group of engineers selected to contribute policy recommendations to Congress for federal housing policies via a US Government Accountability Office (GAO) convening on new building technologies. This builds on Kijewski-Correa's



Kijewski-Correa meeting with a displaced household in Haiti after Hurricane Matthew. (Credit: Alex Taflanidis)

leadership of the Structural Extreme Events Reconnaissance (StEER) network, which advances data-driven approaches to document community resilience in the face of extreme events, such as hurricanes and, most recently, the tragic earthquakes in Venezuela. StEER is an initiative funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and is representative of Kijewski-Correa's proximity to policy impact. "Housing is foundational to every country's economic, health, and education systems," she said. "Recognizing this—and the need for well-designed and well-informed policy in this space—is the first step towards a more sustainable and resilient future."

Pulte affiliate Helge-Johannes Marahrens, Assistant Professor of Computational Social Science, joined Notre Dame this year and brings additional expertise in data science to Pulte and the Lucy Family Institute for Data & Society. His recent work uses large language models to analyze social media to anticipate population displacement during crises, strengthening the evidence base for faster, more targeted humanitarian and policy responses. Marahrens said, "Machine learning and other AI tools help us improve predictive models that drive rapid and effective responses to humanitarian crises. Designing methodologies that can be rapidly deployed when crises unfold means that we can quickly move resources to those who need them."

Navigating Democratic Turbulence

After Gen Z protests toppled Nepal's government in September 2025, the Pulte Institute formed a multidisciplinary team of researchers to launch a study supported by Notre Dame's Democracy Initiative. The work explores Gen Z's role in the regime change, the political discourse among Gen Z in the lead-up to March 2026 elections, and how both connect to democratic quality.

Susan Ostermann, Liu-affiliated Associate Professor of Global Affairs, leads the collaboration alongside Research Professor Madhav Joshi, McKenna-affiliated Assistant Professor of Tech Ethics and Global Affairs Mohammad Rashidujjaman Rifat, and Pulte research scientists Lila Khatiwada and Shriniwas Gautam and Pre-Doctoral Scholar Poulomi Ghosh. The team is also collaborating with Kathmandu University to deploy focus group discussions, interviews, machine learning, and social media analysis to understand the Gen Z movement. In April, the team brought the perspectives of Nepalese youth activists to a wider audience through a Liu Institute flash panel examining Nepal's interim government, the March elections that swept the Rastriya Swatantra Party into power, and the country's democratic future.

Crises in democratic governance are, as the University's strategic framework describes, "one of the disturbing aspects of our age." Pulte affiliate and development economist Alejandro Estefán Dávila, Assistant Professor of Global Affairs, is leading a randomized controlled trial on the impact of civic education in Mexico and India, with planned expansion to the US. The study seeks to understand the role that civics education can play in developing an engaged, democratically committed citizenry in a world where democratic norms are rapidly eroding. Speaking to the unique gap this research fills in



"Crises in democratic governance are one of the disturbing aspects of our age... Notre Dame should more consciously strive to become a forum for bipartisan conversations about a shared democratic future."

John T. McGreevy
Charles and Jill Fischer Provost

literature and policy, Estefán Dávila explained: “Ultimately, the protection of democracy rests upon citizens and their democratic values, and such values are acquired via learning. Understanding what kind of learning leads to strong democratic values is more crucial than it has been in generations.”

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR PEOPLE & PLANET

From farms and forests across the Global South to the Vatican, Pulte affiliates are reshaping how the world pursues sustainability and prioritizes human dignity

Sustainability and poverty are not separate problems to be solved in isolation. They are products of the same systems and must be addressed together. Pulte’s Global Sustainability Research Agenda is built on this premise, advancing a global transformation to a just and sustainable future where people and nature mutually flourish. This agenda is grounded in a transformative change framework and Catholic teachings on integral ecology and human development, and is representative of Pulte’s commitment to not only responding to environmental degradation and poverty, but to redesigning the systems that produce them.



Terraced fields in Rwanda’s countryside.
(Credit: Rwanda Lens via Pexels)

Sustainable agriculture is at the center of this challenge in the developing world, where food systems must feed rapidly growing populations without degrading the soil, water, and ecosystems they depend on. Pulte affiliate Paul Winters, Keough-Hesburgh Professor of Sustainable Development, serves as Executive Director of the Agriculture Innovation Mechanism for Scale (AIM for Scale), a global initiative that partners with governments to bring proven agricultural innovations to farmers facing climate change and food insecurity in the Global South. In early 2026, Winters and his team received a \$2.6 million grant to assist governments in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Rwanda in adapting proven innovations into public programs for millions of farmers.

Concurrently, Pulte-affiliated faculty are advancing a growing body of sustainability work at Notre Dame. From Arun Agrawal’s leadership of the University’s [Just Transformations to Sustainability \(JTS\) Initiative](#) to intersectional work funded by the Poverty Initiative and led by Pulte affiliates Daniel Miller, Krister Andersson, Lakshmi Iyer, and Ellis Adams, Pulte-affiliated faculty are at the heart of the University’s expanding ecosystem of sustainability expertise. Together, these efforts position Notre Dame as a leader in the field and one uniquely equipped to channel the Vatican’s rising enthusiasm for sustainability in its partnerships around the world.

Tracking What Works in Agriculture and Resource Extraction

Understanding which agricultural innovations actually reach farmers and how they change farming practices is foundational to building food systems that can feed growing populations while sustaining the land and water both depend on. Through a competitive selection by the



EARLY RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

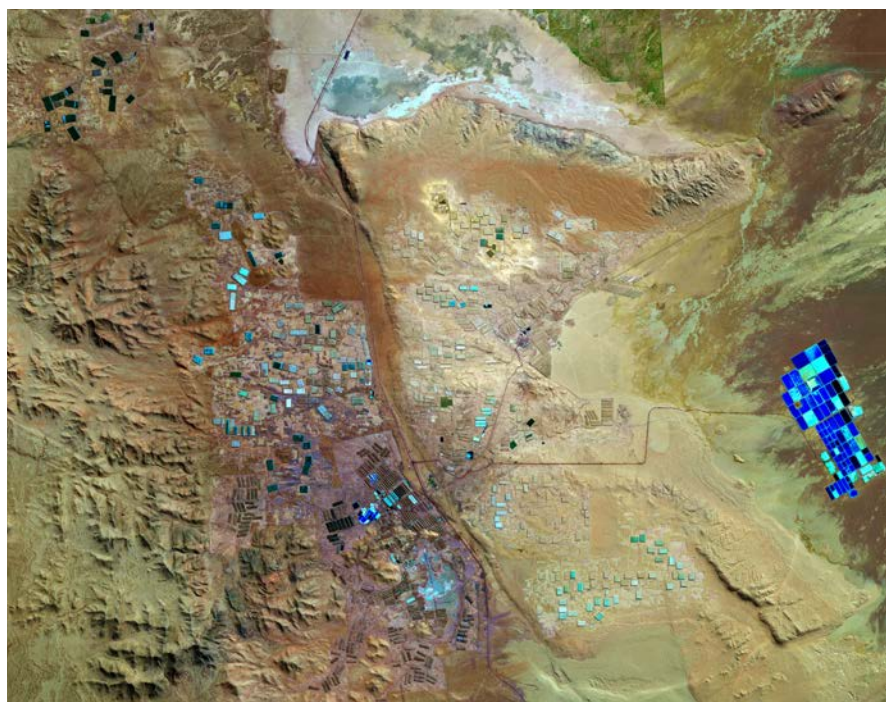
Carlos Calvo-Hernandez

Pulte-affiliated Post-Doctoral Scholar

Carlos Calvo-Hernandez studies how natural resources are governed and how the communities that depend on them are affected. At Pulte, he is examining the livelihood impacts and policy challenges surrounding small-scale mining, an industry that supports millions of people while posing serious environmental and governance questions. Reflecting on his current work, Calvo-Hernandez said, “As someone who believes in the necessity of research to have a clear pipeline to policy, I’m **incredibly proud of the work we’re doing to stand up a comprehensive global database on small-scale mining; such a repository is critical for meeting policy questions in the space with evidence-based solutions.**”

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research’s (CGIAR) Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), the Pulte Institute is conducting stocktake studies that inventory and assess the adoption and impact of agricultural innovations across three countries. In Malawi and the Philippines, Pulte Research Scientist Shriniwas Gautam and Senior Research Scientist Lila Khatiwada are co-leading research with Lead Analytics, with additional support from Pulte affiliate Paul Winters, Keough-Hesburgh Professor of Sustainable Development. Also in Malawi, Pulte is working with local partners Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and the Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR). In the Philippines, the team is collaborating with De La Salle University (DLSU). Arun Agrawal leads the work in Nepal in partnership with ForestAction.

The same questions of measurement and impact extend into Arun Agrawal’s work on resource extraction. Funded by the Kroc Institute, he and Drew Marcantonio, Assistant Professor of Environment, Peace, and Global Affairs, are building the first global synthesis of artisanal and small-scale mining, integrating scattered datasets and case-study evidence into a public, georeferenced platform to analyze patterns of conflict and peacebuilding across ecological, social, and economic domains. Pulte Post-Doctoral Scholar Carlos Calvo-Hernandez leads the



Satellite image of lithium mining operations in Chile. (Credit: “Atacama minerals” by European Space Agency, CC BY-SA 2.0)

systematic review, database construction, and synthesis. Additionally, Pulte affiliate Ellis Adjei Adams, Associate Professor of Geography and Environmental Policy, has brought his knowledge of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) systems to a collaboration with BHP—one of the world's largest mining firms—to assess the impact of water-intensive resource extraction on local water rights and livelihoods. The project has resulted in a publicly available framework and an [interactive website](#) for industry actors and other users to examine potential human right to water violations as well as draw lessons from several relevant case studies.



Kathmandu, Nepal. (Credit: Adobe Stock)

Measuring the Unmeasured: The True Reach of Forest Conservation Policy

Who actually benefits from conservation policies? A

study published in *Nature Sustainability* this year from Pulte affiliate Krister Andersson, Notre Dame Professor of Sustainable Development, focuses on Nepal's Community Forest Programme. While the program is widely credited with doubling the country's forest cover, the study examines data from 500,000 households to show that economic gains

from the program flowed disproportionately to dominant caste and ethnic groups, widening local inequality even as overall poverty fell. The study shows that community-based forest governance programs like this one can bring real benefits, but there is no guarantee those benefits will reach the most socio-economically vulnerable. With support from the University's [Just Transformations to Sustainability Initiative](#), Andersson and David Medvigy, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences, are also exploring these themes further by quantifying how much of the Peruvian Amazon's forest survives due to local conservation efforts.

EARLY RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

Seungmin Lee

Pulte Post-Doctoral Scholar



Payments for ecosystem services (PES) compensate communities for protecting natural systems, making them one of the most widely used tools for aligning conservation goals with local livelihoods. Seungmin Lee advances IGPP's PES research alongside Krister Andersson, drawing on randomized controlled trials in Bolivia and Uganda to test whether these interventions have long-lasting impacts on conservation as well as socioeconomic outcomes. A parallel strand revisits a landmark decentralization reform in Bolivia, pairing its documented environmental effects with new evidence on community livelihoods. Lee's work has also positioned IGPP as a trusted research partner: when local NGO Fundación Natura completed a PES trial in Bolivia, they turned to the IGPP team for analysis. Andersson reflected on the importance of these kinds of partnerships: **"When NGOs and policy actors outside of academia reach out for help in producing research that's useful for them, there is a clear demand and channel for the results to influence policy."**



EARLY RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

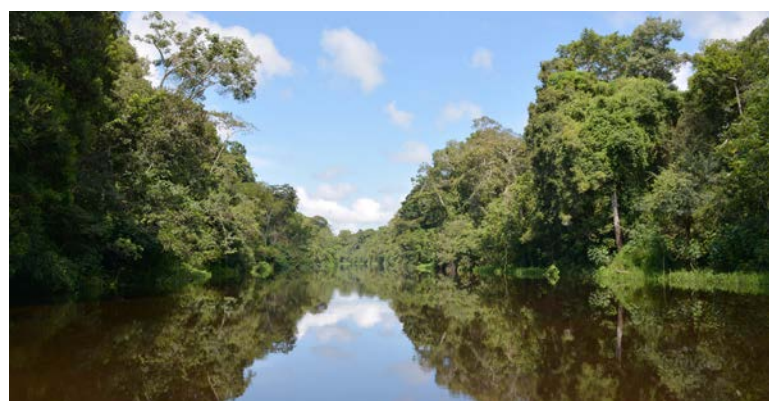
Sacha Ortiz Siani

Pulte Post-Doctoral Scholar

Sacha brings deep knowledge of geospatial analysis and is using those skills, in partnership with the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), to evaluate the effects of unconditional cash transfers on ecological outcomes. **This intensive work innovates by integrating satellite imagery and machine learning into randomized controlled trials to answer fundamental questions about the environmental impacts of poverty alleviation policies.** In August, Siani and Iyer were invited to present their work to GiveDirectly—an organization at the frontlines of identifying the most promising and critical interventions in development.

Innovating Green Pathways to Prosperity: Working at the Nexus of Sustainability and Poverty

The loss of a community's natural resources can undercut its efforts to defeat poverty. Pulte affiliate Daniel Miller, Coyle Mission Collegiate Professor in the Keough School, leads [Innovating Green Pathways to Prosperity \(IGPP\)](#) alongside Pulte affiliates Krister Andersson and Ellis Adjei Adams, and BIG Lab Director Lakshmi Iyer. IGPP is a portfolio of projects funded by the Poverty Initiative that explores how rural communities can overcome poverty without sacrificing the ecosystems they depend on. Faculty and a diverse team of early career researchers contribute to studies in Ghana, India, Kenya, and Peru, and generate evidence on interventions that balance poverty alleviation with environmental protection. Pulte Institute Post-Doctoral Scholars Sacha Ortiz Siani, Seungmin Lee, Ewan Robinson, and Pre-Doctoral Scholar Poulomi Ghosh co-lead various projects in the IGPP portfolio, gaining formational experience in research design, implementation, and policy translation.

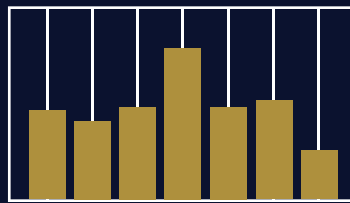


Above: The “Forest of Mirrors” in Pacaya-Samiria Reserve, Peruvian Amazon. (Credit: FLARE)

Below: Members of the IGPP team at the FLARE 2025 conference Lima, Peru. From left to right: Seungmin Lee, Ellis Adjei Adams, Ewan Robinson, Lakshmi Iyer, Poulomi Ghosh, Daniel Miller, and Krister Andersson. (Credit: FLARE)



94 active partnerships



131 publications



84 journal articles

ADDRESSING THE MANY FACES OF POVERTY

Poverty transcends disciplines, and so does Pulte. The breadth of Pulte's work means much of the evidence we generate naturally aligns with the many strategic initiatives taking shape across campus, from sustainability and data to ethics and democratic governance to, of course, poverty. As an institute founded to advance global development, we recognize that actually eliminating poverty requires breakthroughs which meet the needs of people wherever they are—regardless of sector.

As funding streams were upended in early 2025, the [Poverty Initiative](#) was instrumental in supporting Pulte's diverse portfolio—reinforcing our drive to meet the needs of those living in poverty with evidence and action. In the past year, Poverty Initiative support has advanced an array of projects, leading to evidence that underscores Pulte's role in development and its contribution to Notre Dame's broader vision to be a global force for good. While the Poverty Initiative provides structural support across much of Pulte's work, we highlight the following projects as particularly emblematic of our partnership with the Poverty Initiative, and our efforts in the anti-poverty arena more broadly.

Improving Health and Education Outcomes for Students Across the Global South

In Zambia's Copperbelt and Luapula provinces, illness routinely keeps almost a quarter of children out of the classroom every day. When a child falls seriously ill, families are often forced to delay or forgo formal medical care, and the cost is not only one of health: attendance is among the strongest determinants of student success, and illness increases the likelihood of out-of-school days.

Pulte affiliate Isaac Mbiti, Professor of Poverty and Education, is addressing this challenge through the Healthy Learners randomized controlled trial (RCT). The idea is straightforward: in a context where there is a shortage of qualified health workers, can teachers serve as school health workers to improve the diagnosis, treatment, and recovery of students to minimize time out of the classroom? Teachers trained as School Health Workers oversee dedicated health rooms, teach healthy habits, triage using clinical decision support software, and coordinate referrals when



Pre-Doctoral Scholar Hannah Reynolds leads a training for the Healthy Learners study in Zambia.

necessary. Alongside Mbiti, Pre-Doctoral Scholar Hannah Reynolds is playing a key supporting role and traveled to Zambia this spring to oversee research implementation.

By comparing schools running the program against schools that aren't, the team can isolate what benefits Healthy Learners brings, tracking not just health and nutrition but literacy, numeracy, and cognitive development. The evidence generated will provide policymakers in Zambia and similar contexts with a practical path to healthier schools, higher attendance, and, ultimately, the myriad positive effects that come with protecting and supporting education at scale.

EARLY RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

Hannah Reynolds

Pulte Pre-Doctoral Scholar

"Supporting the Healthy Learners project in Zambia—and my time at Pulte more broadly—has been a formative chapter in my career. I gained extensive field experience in Zambia, where I spent six weeks piloting learner assessments, training enumerators, and overseeing data collection. I also developed skills in project management and operations while gaining a richer appreciation for the complexities of conducting high-quality research in practice.

"At the same time, I support the Graduating from Learning Poverty projects in Kenya, Uganda, and Senegal as teams conduct implementation research on foundational learning. Both of **these experiences have greatly deepened my understanding of health and education systems and the realities of implementing projects across diverse contexts.**"



Targeted Tutoring is Closing Gaps in South Bend and Abroad

In two South Bend elementary schools last year, more than a third of students did not pass IREAD, the state test that determines whether they can advance to fourth grade. In the same schools, nearly half of the students were chronically absent, missing 18 or more days of school. Critically, chronic absenteeism is the strongest predictor of high school dropout.

These conditions drew Pulte affiliate TJ D'Agostino, Associate Professor of the Practice, into a project just down the road from his campus office. D'Agostino researches how children learn foundational skills and how systems can scale the delivery of successful learning interventions in some of the most challenging environments globally. **With a network of community partners, D'Agostino founded Our Kids of South Bend (Our Kids), a place-based, cradle-to-career nonprofit serving the Near Northwest Neighborhood.** Our Kids is designed as a backbone organization, layering evidence-based interventions across a single neighborhood and streamlining support to students. D'Agostino reflected on the philosophy behind the work: "The evidence has coalesced around targeting the students most at risk and supporting them with evidence-based approaches so they can progress with their peers. But it's not a once-and-done story—we need to stay with them, accompanying them throughout childhood, and ensuring they have what they need to thrive."



A Boys & Girls Club tutor works with a local student. (Credit: Boys & Girls Club, Northern Indiana Corridor)

D'Agostino and Our Kids are initially focused on improving third-grade reading and reducing chronic absenteeism. They are also partnering with TutorND—a University-sponsored program—to recruit more high school volunteers and expand high-dosage tutoring, one of the most effective interventions for closing academic achievement gaps. Alongside OurKids, D'Agostino is helping the Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Indiana Corridor, the largest after-school provider in the region, to adapt Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), a globally proven literacy model developed in India and now in use across Africa and beyond. TaRL groups students by skill level rather than age, and uses engaging, targeted activities to accelerate foundational reading and math skills at low cost. Drawing on his experience supporting TaRL implementation in Uganda, Kenya, and Senegal, D'Agostino is also helping refine and scale the model for local after-school programs while collaborating with Notre Dame's Lab for Economic Opportunity (LEO) to evaluate its impact. This work exemplifies the Pulte Institute's commitment to translating global evidence into local impact, demonstrating that "global" also includes our own communities.

Generating Evidence at the Frontlines of Developing Economies

Why do some developing economies stall while others soar? Pulte affiliate Brenda Samaniego de la Parra, Assistant Professor of Development Economics, studies that disparity, tracing how day-to-day economic factors, such as where a shop sources its goods or whether a worker holds a formal contract, shape national growth.

Samaniego de la Parra is currently co-leading a study in Lusaka, Zambia, examining how small-scale retailers source and price goods, and whether improved access to information can improve their businesses. The project is backed by the International Growth Centre (IGC) and the Structural Transformation and Economic Growth (STEG) program, and was selected as a Fall 2025 recipient of the Keough School's Global Policy Impact Grant for its clear research-to-policy pipeline. Samaniego de la Parra and her partners have intentionally built an inclusive ecosystem which draws on local input from leaders in Zambian industry, retail, and government for implementation support as well as refinement of recommendations and dissemination support. Samaniego de la Parra highlighted the importance of grounding research in context: "Intentionally considering local networks and engaging with them meaningfully is critical to not only improving the depth and quality of the research, but also for moving swiftly to policy impact."



Lusaka, Zambia. (Credit: Adobe Stock)

EARLY RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

Nabin Pradhan

Pulte-affiliated Post-Doctoral Scholar



Pulte Post-Doctoral Scholar Nabin Pradhan brought expertise in climate and quantitative analysis to a study published this year in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, co-authored with Pulte affiliate Arun Agrawal, examining how a warming climate drives childhood stunting across African countries. The study finds that climate change significantly worsens stunting, with just one degree of warming affecting childhood survival. Pradhan reflected on his work: **"This isn't an abstract problem for the future. These findings underscore the importance of investing in education, sanitation, and household resilience to protect child health in a warming world."** Alongside Pradhan's work on stunting, he led research with Arun Agrawal and an international team of collaborators that resulted in an article and a policy brief in *Nature Sustainability* establishing links between poverty, forest dependence, and biodiversity outcomes in forests.

Safe Water, Climate Change, and the Fight Against Stunting in Africa

Stunting—low height for age caused by chronic malnutrition—ranks among the most damaging conditions a young child can face. A child's brain develops most rapidly in the first three years of life, building the foundations for learning, memory, and emotional regulation, and malnutrition in this window inflicts irreversible damage. In Mozambique, more than a third of children under five are stunted, significantly increasing their risk for diminished development, school outcomes, and lifelong health and earning potential—diminishments which rapidly become national and generational challenges when left unaddressed.

Research led by Pulte affiliate Santosh Kumar Gautam, Professor of Development and Global Health Economics, has shed fresh light on how to reduce stunting in Mozambique and similar contexts. Gautam's study, published in *Children* and co-authored with Notre Dame graduate and undergraduate students, found that access to safe drinking water can reduce the odds of stunting by 20%. This finding establishes clean drinking water among the most effective Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) interventions for stunting, and provides powerful evidence for driving policy to ensure clean water access for children around the globe. Gautam spoke on the importance of generating evidence on this issue: "By identifying which investments matter most, this work helps policymakers in Mozambique and similar low- and middle-income settings allocate resources to improve clean water access and reduce child malnutrition."



"A single degree of warming alters the foundational conditions of child survival."

Arun Agrawal
Director, JTS

Working Together for Impact: A New Generation of Scholar- Practitioners, Partnerships, and Networks



Building evidence and translating it into real-world impact requires robust engagement with scholars, partners, and networks. The Pulte Institute works alongside early career researchers, scholars, practitioners, and policy actors who share a commitment to rigorous evidence and evidence-based action. As a vital collaborative hub within the Keough School and the University of Notre Dame, the Pulte Institute supports affiliated faculty and staff as they share decades of experience with those at the start of their careers—from undergraduate and graduate students to a new Sustainable Development PhD cohort to budding Pre- and Post-Doctoral Scholars—helping shape the next generation of leaders committed to rigorous, impactful work.

Bringing scholarship to bear on the world's most intractable problems requires partnerships. While Pulte solidified many collaborations on campus this year—from merging with the Building Inclusive Growth (BIG) Lab and standing up more projects under the University's [Poverty](#) and [Just Transformations to Sustainability \(JTS\) Initiatives](#)—the Institute also launched new collaborations in the greater Michiana region, across the US, and globally, including deeper collaborations with the Vatican and Catholic Relief Services. In the past year alone, Pulte has engaged in 94 partnerships across 21 countries—such diversity speaks to the strength of Pulte both in convening partners across campus and meeting the needs of partners around the globe.

Achieving impact also depends on meaningful and lasting collaborations. Networks play a crucial role in fostering new initiatives and rapidly disseminating what works to the actors who need that evidence. Pulte supports research networks which connect with thousands of individuals and organizations engaged in the fight against poverty and environmental degradation. This approach to developing partnerships on campus and around the world (and maintaining communities of practice that transcend borders) places Pulte at the center of a dynamic system, well-poised to tackle the problems of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.



"The Pulte Institute...and the Building Inclusive Growth (BIG) Lab are both focused on development issues in the Global South....[both] leverage distinctive Catholic networks to build enduring partnerships, and move from fundamental research to policy recommendations. [Both] provide superb research opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students."

Notre Dame
Strategic Framework

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PRACTITIONER-SCHOLARS

Preparing new practitioners and researchers is essential to Pulte’s mission, and this year saw two major developments toward that end. Pulte affiliate Santosh Kumar Gautam, Professor of Development and Global Health Economics, directs the Keough School’s new PhD program in Sustainable Development, and fellow Pulte and BIG Lab affiliates serve as primary instructors and advisors to a rising generation of development scholars. However, Pulte’s commitment to training the next generation extends even further: over the past year, 53 undergraduate and graduate students held research positions in the Institute, with an additional seven Pre-Doctoral and 10 Post-Doctoral scholars, including those in the BIG Lab.

“OUR GOAL IS TO DEVELOP SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONERS WHO COMBINE METHODOLOGICAL RIGOR WITH A DEEP COMMITMENT TO REAL-WORLD IMPACT, WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTIONS THEIR RESEARCH IS MEANT TO INFORM.”

Santosh Kumar Gautam, Professor of Development and Global Health Economics

Additionally, the STEM-designated PhD Program in Sustainable Development trains the next generation of scholars to address the world’s most pressing development challenges. The program combines rigorous interdisciplinary training and advanced quantitative methods with an applied, policy-facing approach, preparing graduates to produce high-impact research that informs evidence-based policymaking and advances sustainable development. Gautam explained, “Our goal is to develop scholar-practitioners who combine methodological rigor with a deep commitment to real-world impact, working in partnership with the communities and institutions their research is meant to inform.” That orientation is reflected in the faculty itself: of the program’s 17 participating faculty PhD advisors, 13 are affiliated with the Pulte Institute and/or BIG Lab, ensuring each cohort is instructed and mentored by scholars who move fluidly between evidence and impact.

Over the past year, Pulte-affiliated faculty also offered 37 undergraduate and graduate courses, and served as advisors to Master of Global Affairs students in the Integration Lab (i-Lab)—a capstone experience for Keough graduates that provides teams the opportunity to work directly with partner organizations around the world, design and conduct fieldwork in tandem with local organizations, and deploy real world solutions on real world problems. Paul Perrin, Associate Professor of the Practice and Pulte affiliate, has served as Academic Director of the i-Lab since 2024.



Professor TJ D'Agostino and Master of Global Affairs students meet with stakeholders in Odisha, India as part of i-Lab fieldwork. (Credit: i-Lab)

PARTNERSHIPS

A Common Pursuit: BIG Lab Joins the Pulte Institute

Building bridges at Notre Dame deepens the capacity for what we can do. The merger of the Building Inclusive Growth (BIG) Lab and the Pulte Institute is one such bridge, expanding the ability of two Notre Dame units whose work already overlaps: development economics informs much of development scholarship, regardless of sector. Beyond leveraging a common infrastructure to accelerate the impact of development economics research, proximity can spur collaboration and new lines of research. BIG Lab Director Lakshmi Iyer spoke to this element of the merger: “While Pulte and BIG Lab faculty will continue to publish and lead the discovery of knowledge in their respective areas, we now have a much larger table to share, collaborate, and launch joint initiatives to alleviate global poverty.”



Keynote speaker Reza Baqir addresses the audience at BIG Lab's "Debt Relief in the Global South" colloquium. (Credit: Jennifer Mayo)

The BIG Lab also brings a proven capacity to convene. In May 2026, over 100 policymakers, practitioners, and scholars gathered at Notre Dame for a two-day colloquium on Debt Relief in the Global South. Sponsored by the Gates Foundation and featuring a keynote by Pakistan's former Minister of Finance Reza Baqir, participants were challenged to consider the role of sovereign debt in national destiny. How can nations develop under insurmountable debt? Speakers and attendees engaged in extensive dialogue, and outlined the kinds of reforms necessary to bring about a more just and equitable financial future.



"...colleges, schools, and divisions working together will allow Notre Dame to make meaningful contributions to questions of national and international concern."

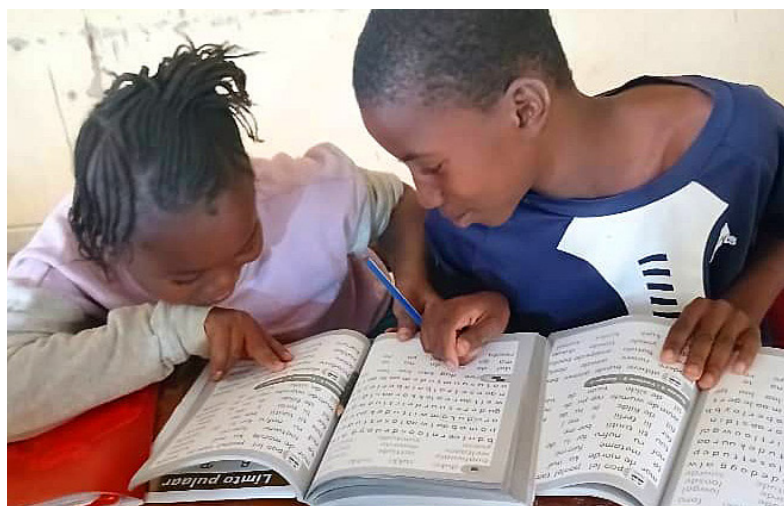
Notre Dame
Strategic Framework

Building Partnerships and Strengthening Foundational Learning Across Africa

Funded by Notre Dame's Poverty Initiative, the Graduating from Learning Poverty (GLP) initiative builds research-practice partnerships across Kenya, Uganda, and Senegal to understand how and why foundational-learning programs work, and under what conditions they scale. In Senegal, the work centers on Success for Summer (Ndaw Wune Vacances, NWV), a community-led summer program utilizing Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) methodology to reach students who have fallen behind their peers. This work is led by Pulte affiliate TJ D'Agostino, Associate Professor of the Practice, Fernanda Soares, Assistant Research Professor at Notre Dame's Global Center for the Development of the Whole Child in the Institute for Educational Initiatives, Patrizio Piraino, BIG Lab affiliate and Professor of Education, Labor, and Development in the Keough School, and Mamadou Amadou Ly,

Director of the Senegal-based Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED). ARED is already among the most innovative and impactful African educational organizations. This year, [Mamadou Ly was named one of TIME's 100 Most Influential People of 2026](#) for his work in Senegal and his more than three decades strengthening education across West and Central Africa, including championing native-language instruction and shaping Senegal's Harmonized Model of Bilingual Education.

NWV delivers accelerated, targeted instruction to students who have finished second or third grade but still struggle in reading and mathematics, and uses quality instructional materials and leveled groups to close learning gaps, counter summer learning loss, and reduce grade repetition and dropout. Through the GLP initiative, Notre Dame faculty collaborate with ARED to evaluate the program's impact and inform how to drive continuous improvement. D'Agostino spoke to the importance of the partnerships for the GLP project: "This work is quite literally built by our partners—collaboratively, we want to improve the quality of their interventions and support their efforts to effectively scale those programs within their contexts. We're incredibly lucky to have partners like Mamadou. Local champions are critical to disseminating successful policy across their countries and throughout the region."



Students engage in foundational skills programming in Senegal. (Credit: ARED)

The Conditions for Flourishing: A Partnership with the Rights and Resources Initiative

For twenty years, the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)—a global coalition advancing the land and resource rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant Peoples, and local communities—has tracked who legally owns and controls the world's land, publishing annual data on community forest, land, and water tenure. RRI's Tenure Tool has become a foundational source for the field, providing the evidence needed to hold governments accountable and press for stronger rights. The impact is measurable: since 2000, the percentage of the world's forests legally owned and managed by local communities has nearly doubled to 16%.

RRI is now working directly with Pulte affiliates Krister Andersson, Notre Dame Professor of Sustainable Development, and Daniel Miller, Coyle Mission Collegiate Professor, to launch a new dataset: a tool that tracks the conditions that allow local communities to flourish alongside legal ownership of their land, water, and forests. "Ownership often is not the only lever," Andersson said. "A life full of dignity and wellbeing requires many components, so while ownership might be the 'first domino,' this work seeks to understand and accelerate the factors that create meaningful, dignified lives for these communities."



Sônia Guajajara, Brazil's former Minister of Indigenous Peoples, speaks at the Global Summit on Collective Livelihoods & Conservation. (Credit: Lucas Wasson, RRI)

Andersson and Miller drew on more than 150 studies and the contextual knowledge of practitioners and local experts to distill 50 indicators into a framework of five policy domains and associated enabling conditions within each domain: tenure security, infrastructure, institutional autonomy and accountability, enterprise and capacity building, as well as inclusive governance and cultural respect. In May, the Global Summit on Collective Livelihoods & Conservation, convened by RRI and partner organizations in Brazil, offered promising validation of the work thus far. Sônia Guajajara, Brazil's former Minister of Indigenous Peoples, and a current congresswoman, named four of these enabling conditions in her keynote remarks and explored

the logic behind them in detail. "Validation of our findings from someone representing both the highest levels of policy and on-the-ground Indigenous perspectives is obviously exciting," Miller explained, "It speaks to the relevance and promise of our work—and that academic-practitioner collaborations like ours can not only push the boundaries of knowledge, but also show what integral human development actually looks like."

The effort also aligns closely with the [Poverty Initiative](#)-funded Innovating Green Pathways to Prosperity (IGPP) project: both seek to understand the elements required to flourish and to reinforce the Institute's broader poverty agenda while recognizing the necessity of partnership as a vehicle for change. The partnership with RRI is one instance in which an organization has a clear requirement and the expertise at Pulte can fill that need. "This research already has a pipeline to impact," Andersson said. "With this tool, RRI can empower a new era of advocacy."

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR SUSTAINED IMPACT: THE POWER OF RESEARCH NETWORKS

The Pulte Institute advances the work of four independent research networks, highlighting the importance of collaborating outside of project timelines to maintain progress in responding to the world's biggest challenges

While individual projects allow for the generation of evidence of what works, networks allow experts to ideate, launch new initiatives, and rapidly disseminate findings. Pulte-affiliated faculty and staff play key roles in four independent research networks: the [Central America Research Alliance \(CARA\)](#), the [Forest Livelihoods: Assessment, Research, and Engagement \(FLARE\)](#) Network, the [National Sustainability Society \(NSS\)](#), and the [Gala initiative](#). While each fills a particular need for its sector and context, all four extend Pulte's reach and staying power at a time when USAID is no longer a convening force, and hold focus on a problem far longer than any single project can.

CARA Convenes Experts on Reintegration in Central America and Beyond



Deportees at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, 2025. (Credit: Nick Benson via Flickr)

In 2025, for the first time in more than 50 years, more people left the United States than entered it. And recent research from the [Central America Research Alliance \(CARA\)](#) shows a growing number of those leaving the US have lived there for years, if not decades. This deep ‘uprooting’ means that lives are being more thoroughly disrupted and more families are being separated, with lasting personal and economic consequences.

Tom Hare, Associate Director for Programs and Evidence Engagement, co-leads the CARA network of some 45 researchers and practitioners across 24 universities and non-governmental organizations to draw attention to the most prominent patterns in migration across the region. Hare spoke to the unique challenges facing Central America, specifically Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala: “One of the major challenges we’re seeing concerns remittances—money sent across borders—which account for up to a quarter of GDP in these countries. They’re spiking right now because people are funding their relocation out of the US, but we project it will drop significantly in the coming years. How to replace that capital while simultaneously increasing social support for returnees who no longer have US incomes is a critical—if not existential—question for these societies.”

Hare also co-authored a [Keough School Policy Brief](#) this year which draws on recent publications from CARA partners and serves as a vehicle to highlight the challenges facing returnees and the policy recommendations to address them. In May, Hare traveled to Guatemala City to meet with CARA partners and officials from more than 20 government ministries that form the Guatemalan Committee for the Attention and Protection of Migrants to disseminate their findings and discuss policy responses. Hare reflected on the unique role that CARA fills in this shifting landscape: “CARA is well-positioned to study the challenges facing migrants. Our network of partners means we have local connections across contexts who can convene to rapidly disseminate policy recommendations to the people who can act.”



CARA partners meet with government officials in Guatemala City, Guatemala. (Credit: CARA)

Beyond Central America, [Poverty Initiative](#) support has enabled Hare to expand CARA's network to include a diversity of migration scholars, policymakers, and practitioners across the globe. In 2025, Hare presented at the Conference on Theological and Social Studies at the Vatican and the Central American Forum in Madrid. Engaging in these events brought CARA together with new thought partners such as the Spanish Development Agency (AECID), the Scalabrini International Migration Institute in Rome, and—along with Notre Dame colleagues from the emerging [Migration Initiative](#)—the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development at the Vatican. Migration crises often escalate and evolve too fast for traditional research models. For this reason alone it is critical to sustain these partnerships to quickly share research when it does offer insights responsive to urgent needs.

FLARE: A Global Hub for Forests and Livelihoods

Few researchers sit closer to the global conversation on forests and livelihoods than Pulte affiliate Daniel Miller, Coyle Mission Collegiate Professor in the Keough School. Miller coordinates the [Forests and Livelihoods: Assessment, Research, and Engagement \(FLARE\) Network](#), an international community of 1,350 researchers, practitioners, and policymakers across 66 countries, whose secretariat has been based at the Pulte Institute since 2021, with joint support from Notre Dame's [Environmental Change Initiative \(ECI\)](#).

"WHEN RESEARCHERS, INDIGENOUS LEADERS, AND MINISTERS SIT AT THE SAME TABLE, THE BEST SCIENCE ON FORESTS AND LIVELIHOODS CAN ACTUALLY SHAPE AND IMPACT POLICY."

Katia Nakamura, Associate Program Director, FLARE



Participants engage in a workshop at the FLARE 2025 Conference in Lima, Peru. (Credit: FLARE)

FLARE's annual meeting is the field's signature gathering. In October 2025, the convening drew roughly 280 delegates from 40 countries to Lima, Peru, under the theme "Forests and Transformative Change." Three former Peruvian Ministers of the Environment, Indigenous representatives from across the Amazon, and a keynote from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) climate leader Manuel Pulgar-Vidal underscored the direct connections of FLARE to policy and practice. For Associate Program Director Katia Nakamura, that convening power increasingly defines FLARE. "When researchers, Indigenous leaders, and ministers sit at the same table, the best science on forests and livelihoods can actually shape and impact policy." Between conferences, FLARE publishes a [policy brief series](#), operates thematic working groups, and manages open research tools.

The National Sustainability Society Convenes at Notre Dame

In October 2025, Notre Dame hosted the second annual [National Sustainability Society \(NSS\) conference](#), drawing more than 375 professionals from academia, industry, government, and nonprofits. The Pulte Institute co-sponsored the gathering, whose theme centered on the flourishing of people and the planet as a prerequisite for a just and sustainable future.

Pulte affiliate Arun Agrawal, Pulte Family Professor of Development Policy and Director of Notre Dame's [Just Transformations to Sustainability \(JTS\) Initiative](#), chaired the committee that planned and organized the meeting. "It was deeply inspiring to see our participants come together here at Notre Dame," Agrawal said. Cristy Watkins, Sustainability and Development Program Manager and Operations and Engagement Director of the National Sustainability Society, coordinated

the conference's operations and attendee engagement. While the conference will shift to Denver in 2026, Agrawal and Watkins' direct support of the society ensures that JTS and sustainability research as a whole at Notre Dame has this important platform to reach leaders across the sector.



Arun Agrawal at NSS conference, 2025. (Credit: Ryan Juskiewicz)

Gala Scales Open Learning While Remaining Rooted in Context

Pulte affiliate Rebecca Hardin, Professor of Sustainable Development, directs the [Gala initiative](#), an open-access learning platform designed to encourage collaborative teaching and learning. Hardin, an environmental anthropologist, traces Gala's mission to her years in the Central African Republic, where beekeepers, trackers, and farmers shaped her learning but whose perspectives were often excluded from policy debates. Closing such disconnects is the mission of Gala. The platform allows individuals and communities to create, revise, and publish data-rich modules together, with no paywall, across fields from environmental justice to tropical ecology. "Knowledge grows in necessary and fascinating ways when it's shared and shaped by the people who use it," Hardin said. "Gala exists to make rigorous, real-world learning open to everyone, and to keep it tethered to the places and communities where it's generated, adapted, and applied."

Gala joined the Pulte Institute in summer 2025 from the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability, and its first year at Pulte spanned teaching, applied partnership, and open-science research. The team created a [Pulte Institute library](#) to house student creations and contributions developed in Hardin's "Poverty and Innovation" course. On the research side, Gala partnered with The Water Tower and industry professionals to develop a [module on disinfectant byproducts](#) built for continued professional learning and completed the National Science Foundation (NSF) [Socio-Environmental Knowledge \(SEEK\)](#) network project which linked Gala to Wikidata to surface grey literature and other hidden contributions, prompting further platform improvements. Hardin also co-authored two papers with the NSF-funded Online Content for Experiential Learning of Tropical Systems (OCELOTS) network, [examining authentic learning](#) in open educational resources and the [effect of module-building on authors](#). Across this busy inaugural year with Pulte, the platform published 96 modules and drew 172,707 unique visitors, reaching 75 institutions across 30 countries.

Our Team

The Pulte Institute is composed of faculty, staff, and early career researchers working on various topics across campus and beyond. **Faculty and staff affiliated with the BIG Lab are denoted by orange.** All faculty are appointed in the Keough School of Global Affairs unless stated otherwise.

NEW CORE AFFILIATED FACULTY

This year we welcomed five new core affiliated faculty to Pulte who bring deep expertise in development and labor economics, data, educational development, and more to the Keough School.



Rebecca Hardin

Professor of Sustainable Development | Director, Gala Online Learning Platform

Hardin directs the Gala initiative, fostering collaborative, open-access education across fields like environmental justice and biotechnology. The mission of Gala is informed by her early work in the Central African Republic, which shaped her commitment to inclusive knowledge sharing. Her recent work focuses on building digital archives that support knowledge exchange for marginalized communities and interdisciplinary teams.



Helge-Johannes Marahrens

Assistant Professor of Computational Social Science

Marahrens's research combines social science, data science, and statistics, focusing on how globalization affects urban inequality and migration patterns. His recent work uses large language models to analyze social media to anticipate population displacement during crises. Marahrens is also affiliated with the Lucy Family Institute for Data & Society, and holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Indiana University.



Isaac Mbiti

Professor of Poverty and Education

Mbiti's research spans poverty, education, and development economics. Some of his recent work evaluates how expanding healthcare services into Zambian schools improves health, attendance and learning outcomes. Mbiti is a BIG Lab affiliate and serves as Co-Scientific Director of J-PAL Africa. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from Brown University.



Francesc Ortega

Professor of Sustainable Development

Ortega specializes in climate risk, insurance, and housing markets, with additional research on labor markets and immigration policy. His recent work examines flood insurance demand, the impact of flooding on insurance take-up, business adaptation to hurricanes, and the effects of immigrant inflows on nursing home care quality. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from New York University.



Brenda Samaniego de la Parra

Assistant Professor of Development Economics

Samaniego de la Parra's research focuses on labor markets, informality, and firm dynamics in developing countries. Her recent work explores how small-scale retailers in Zambia can benefit from greater market knowledge. Samaniego de la Parra is also affiliated with the BIG Lab, and she holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Chicago.

PULTE CORE AFFILIATED FACULTY



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Associate Professor of Geography
and Environmental Policy



Emily Grubert

Associate Professor of Sustainable Energy Policy



Arun Agrawal

Pulte Family Professor of
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Inaugural Director,
Just Transformations
to Sustainability Initiative



Lakshmi Iyer

Professor of Economics and Global Affairs
(Joint appointment, Department of Economics)
Director, Building Inclusive Growth (BIG) Lab



Krister Andersson

Notre Dame Professor of
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Resilience (Joint appointment in College of Engineering)



TJ D'Agostino

Associate Professor of the Practice



Daniel C. Miller

Coyle Mission Collegiate Professor
Coordinator, Forests and Livelihoods: Assessment,
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Alejandro Estefán Dávila

Assistant Professor of
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Paul Perrin

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Paul Winters

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Baxter Kamana-Williams



Ewan Robinson



Josh Lappen



Saumitra (Shomi) Sinha



Seungmin Lee



Yijia (Ayla) Wen

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Amadou Jawo



Zeina Shalaby



Sagara Ann Johny



Sebastian Vega Haro



Laurene Lee



Pulte Institute for
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Donor Acknowledgements



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Pulte Institute for Global Development

Pulte Family Charitable Foundation (est. 2019)

William J. Pulte Directorship of the Pulte Institute for Global Development

Pulte Family Charitable Foundation (est. 2019)



Pulte Family Charitable Foundation Team, 2026.
(Credit: Pulte Family Charitable Foundation)

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Brian and Rosemary Kristiansen (est. 2024)

NEW GIFTS IN 2025-2026*

John Burchett
Jim and Mary Catalino
Mark Clarke
Calvin and Cecilia Colbert
Pat and Robin Cuneo
Forrest Fisher
Gary and Mary Lou Gegick
Robert and Anne Hawkins
Luis and Kristen Hernandez
Brian and Estela Holst
Jim Hynan
Eddie and Gema Island
J. Patrick Kelly
Matthew Flood and Elizabeth Keough Flood
Gregory and Allie Klazura
Brian and Rosemary Kristiansen
Elizabeth Maxwell
Bob and Denise McQuillan
Janeen-Ann Olds
Justin Pendarvis
Christopher M. Planicka
Michael A. Roscitt
Rick Stack

*Reporting on gifts of \$100 and up.





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