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SCRANTON, Pa. — August 21, 2018
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The Jesuit-run University of Scranton announced Aug. 20 it was rescinding honorary degrees given to three former bishops of the Diocese of Scranton, and removing their names from buildings.

Jesuit Fr. Scott Pilarz, the university president, said the school is doing so because "these bishops covered up the crimes and misdeeds of men who were under their jurisdiction and placed children in harm's way."

Also, the Scranton Diocese said Aug. 17 it had begun a formal "assessment" into how one of those bishops, retired Bishop James Timlin, handled allegations of clergy sexual abuse during his tenure.

In a letter to the university community, Pilarz said the school's actions were taken in light of the Pennsylvania grand jury report detailing clerical sex abuse claims in six Pennsylvania dioceses, including the Scranton Diocese.

Pilarz said he met early Aug. 20 with a group of administrators, faculty, alumni and student leaders to recommend a course of action to the university board of trustees, which unanimously approved those recommendations later that day in a special session.

Replacement names already have been chosen for those buildings where bishops' names will be scrubbed.

"The name on Timlin House will be removed and Mulberry Plaza, the complex in which the building is located, will be renamed Romero Plaza in honor of the late Oscar Romero, archbishop of San Salvador, who will be canonized by Pope Francis on Oct. 14," Pilarz said.

McCormick Hall, named for the late Scranton Bishop J. Carroll McCormick, will be renamed MacKillop Hall in honor of St. Mary MacKillop, an Australian nun who became Australia's first saint in 2010. She founded the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart and publicly exposed the sexual abuse of children by a priest.

Hannan Hall, named for another deceased Scranton bishop, Jerome Hannan, will be renamed Giblin-Kelly Hall in honor of Brendan Giblin, a University of Scranton senior who was killed in 2006 while on spring break in Panama City, and William Kelly Jr., a 1993 alumnus who was killed in the 9/11 terror attack on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001.

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Hannan was Scranton's bishop from 1954 until his death in 1965. He was succeeded by McCormick, who served as bishop from 1966 to 1983; he died in 1996.

The Pennsylvania grand jury report went back to 1947 and found more than 1,000 abuse allegations lodged against more than 300 priests in the dioceses of Scranton, Harrisburg, Allentown, Erie, Greensburg and Pittsburgh.

"These actions are important, but the gravity of the information we now know demands even more of us," Pilarz said. The university's campus ministry, counseling center and employee assistance program will be available for students or staff "living with the lifelong scars of sexual abuse," he added, and the school is devoting resources to collaborate with Catholics in the diocese for "discussions and reflection in the long but hopeful process to rebuild trust and find peace."

Recommendations from the Scranton Diocese's Independent Review Board on Timlin's handling of abuse allegations are expected by Aug. 31, according to the diocesan statement. "Simultaneously, Bishop (Joseph) Bambera (of Scranton) has

referred the matter to the Holy See, which has authority over Bishop Timlin's canonical status. This is consistent with how the diocese handles all similar allegations," it added.

"As in all cases, while these matters are under review, Bishop Timlin is not authorized to represent the Diocese of Scranton in any public events, liturgical or otherwise."

Timlin, who turned 91 Aug. 5, served as Scranton's bishop from 1984 to 2003. He lives in a home for retired priests run by the diocese.