WASHINGTON, DC — The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) today announced that Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded CIC $9,912,800 to support the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) at independent colleges and universities. This grant, the largest in CIC’s history, will support a number of ongoing and new NetVUE initiatives through 2023, as well as several related CIC activities.

The bulk of the grant—more than $7 million—will be disbursed to NetVUE member colleges and universities through various grant initiatives. Three current grant programs will be continued for several more years, providing valuable professional development and program initiatives for vocational exploration and discernment at NetVUE member campuses. In addition, two new grant programs will be launched: one that encourages member institutions to reframe their “institutional saga” in light of new challenges and opportunities, and one that promotes guided internship opportunities through campus partnerships with businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations. The Lilly Endowment grant also will support the development of two additional books by the NetVUE Scholarly Resources Project (adding to the three volumes already published by Oxford University Press), as well as an in-depth empirical study of the effects of vocational exploration programs on NetVUE member campuses.

Established in 2009, NetVUE has expanded rapidly and now includes 232 member colleges and universities and five related organizations. Some of these institutions have formal or historic ties to a variety of protestant, Catholic, and other religious bodies, while others have no religious affiliation. All have found the concepts of “vocation” and “calling” to be helpful to their students as they seek to discern their future direction in life.

In announcing the grant, CIC President Richard Ekman said, “CIC is grateful to Lilly Endowment for this significant recognition of the accomplishments of NetVUE member colleges.
and universities, as well as confidence in the value of pedagogical and co-curricular exploration of questions about meaning and purpose related to choices of academic majors and professional direction.”

“NetVUE member colleges and universities are responding to a hunger among college students to explore deep questions of meaning and purpose and to discover how they can draw on their faith as they seek to use their knowledge and talents to contribute to the well-being of the world,” said Christopher Coble, vice president for religion at Lilly Endowment. “Lilly Endowment is pleased to support CIC and this exceptional network of schools.”

In addition to providing grant opportunities and scholarly resources, NetVUE encourages collaboration among its member campuses through national and regional conferences, professional development seminars, an online community network, and consultant and campus visit programs. David Cunningham, professor of religion at Hope College (MI) and director of NetVUE, observed that “the network’s member campuses already bring extraordinary energy to the work of helping students discern their many callings in life, and to sharing knowledge and best practices with other institutions. This new award from Lilly Endowment Inc. will provide additional resources for them to carry out this work and to collaborate in new and exciting ways.”

The grant also funds other CIC programs: three years of faculty seminars on Teaching Interfaith Understanding; semi-annual meetings of the Executives in Church Related Higher Education; and modest capacity-building grants to denominational organizations to strengthen their ties with NetVUE. Prior to this latest award, Lilly Endowment had provided more than $17 million in grants to CIC for NetVUE since its founding in 2009. More information about NetVUE programs, services, and membership is available at www.cic.edu/NetVUE.

About CIC: The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of 765 nonprofit independent colleges and universities, state-based councils of independent colleges, and other higher education affiliates, that works to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of independent higher education’s contributions to society. CIC is the major national organization that focuses on services to leaders of independent colleges and universities and state-based councils. CIC offers conferences, seminars, publications, and other programs and services that help institutions improve educational quality, administrative and financial performance, student outcomes, and institutional visibility. It conducts the largest annual conferences of college and university presidents and of chief academic officers in the United States. Founded in 1956, CIC is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. For more information, visit www.cic.edu.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family—J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons Eli and J.K. Jr.—through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders’ wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. More information can be found at www.lillyendowment.org.