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Council of Independent Colleges Receives $15.2 Million Grant from Lilly Endowment to Enhance Programs Related to Calling and Vocation

Washington, DC—The Council of Independent Colleges announces that Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded CIC a multi-million dollar grant to fund continued development of its Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE).

NetVUE is a nationwide network of colleges and universities formed to enrich the theological and intellectual exploration of vocation among undergraduate students. It was established in 2009 with support from Lilly Endowment following the success of the Endowment’s earlier initiative, Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation. Today, 292 colleges and universities are members of NetVUE; financial support for NetVUE comes from membership dues as well as from Lilly Endowment. NetVUE efforts promote vocational reflection in the curriculum, co-curricular activities, and overall culture of independent higher education.

The $15,296,000 grant, the largest single gift in CIC’s history, will be used to focus on strategic priorities related to vocation in higher education over a four-year period. Over half the grant will provide support to NetVUE member institutions to fund faculty and staff professional development, student programming, and other activities related to vocational discernment—including a new grant program to identify and encourage future leaders of faith communities. The grant will also support two major leadership development programs on vocation that NetVUE will offer to faculty and staff members; expanded funding for scholarly publications and other resources on vocational discernment; and new opportunities to support campus chaplains. NetVUE’s mission is informed by a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and ensures that programs that foster vocational reflection and discernment are accessible for all undergraduate students.

NetVUE Director David Cunningham observed that “this substantial award from Lilly Endowment will enable NetVUE to broaden and deepen the programs and services that are available to its member institutions, which include colleges and universities with formal or historic ties to a variety of Christian traditions as well as institutions with no religious affiliation. These resources come at a critical time for undergraduate students, who are increasingly focused on how they can make a difference in the world.”

“Many college students are eager to explore how to live meaningful lives that are marked by a deep sense of purpose,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “We are pleased that NetVUE will expand its efforts to support...
colleges and universities across the United States as they help students draw on the wisdom of their religious traditions to make choices about their futures."

The grant will help CIC sustain and expand the transformational work done through NetVUE. The grant also will provide funding to continue Teaching Interfaith Understanding Seminars in partnership with Interfaith America and to expand CIC’s Presidential Vocation and Institution Mission program to include opportunities for longer serving presidents to engage in vocational reflection and renewal.

“CIC is grateful to Lilly Endowment for supporting this important work to help young people explore questions about religion, spirituality, and ethics as they consider their purposes in life,” said CIC President Marjorie Hass. “Students of this generation are hungering for meaning and for ways to connect academic learning to spiritual, theological, and ethical values. NetVUE member colleges have built a community of practice among faculty, staff, and senior leaders that is essential to the important work of helping undergraduates think broadly and deeply about their future directions.”

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About CIC

The **Council of Independent Colleges** (CIC) is an association of more than 700 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 independent 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.

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

**Lilly Endowment Inc.** is a private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his 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, it 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. The Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. However it maintains a special commitment to its founders’ hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.