WASHINGTON, DC — The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) today announced that David S. Cunningham, professor of religion and director of the CrossRoads Project at Hope College, Holland, Michigan, will become director of CIC’s Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) program, beginning September 1, 2017. Cunningham will lead the nationwide, campus-supported network of more than 220 colleges and universities that fosters the intellectual and theological exploration of vocation among undergraduate students. NetVUE features a large national conference held every other year, regional gatherings hosted by member institutions in off-years, and a number of programs and services, including grants to member institutions, to support the development of campus programs for vocational exploration. The initiative is administered by CIC with support from Lilly Endowment Inc. and member dues.

In announcing the appointment, CIC President Richard Ekman said, “David Cunningham is an outstanding teacher, scholar, and guide. His work with NetVUE as director of the Scholarly Resources Project and as editor of two volumes on vocation and the academy have demonstrated his stellar dedication and leadership.”

Cunningham has taught at Hope College since 2003, also serving as director of Hope’s Klooster Center for Excellence in Writing since 2011. As director of the CrossRoads Project, Cunningham led Hope’s Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV) project, also funded by Lilly Endowment. From 2008 to 2009, Cunningham directed the Vocation in Undergraduate Education Conference for CIC that was a forerunner of NetVUE.

Earlier he taught theology and ethics at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary,
Evanston, Illinois, from 1997 to 2003; and he taught theology at University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, from 1990 to 1997. He holds a PhD from Duke University, in Christian theology, where he was a Jacob Javits Fellow, and a BA and MA from the University of Cambridge, England. He earned a BS in communication studies at Northwestern University.


With the appointment of Cunningham, the NetVUE national office will relocate to Hope College. “We are proud to have the opportunity to host NetVUE at Hope College, and we are equally proud of David Cunningham not only for his leadership of our CrossRoads Project but for his leadership in enriching higher education’s discussion and understanding of the importance of vocation,” said Hope College President John C. Knapp. “We’re grateful for the ways that the Lilly program and NetVUE have enhanced our programs, and are looking forward to a continuing partnership that will serve students both at Hope and across the country well.”

“Programs for vocational reflection and discernment are having an enormously positive impact on the lives of undergraduates at independent colleges and universities,” said Cunningham. “I am honored to have been a part of this effort, both at my own institution and at the national level. I am grateful to the Council of Independent Colleges and to Hope College for their support and their confidence in me as I take this next step in my own vocational journey.”

NetVUE has five main goals: to deepen intellectual and theological dimensions of vocational exploration; to examine the role of vocational exploration in a variety of institutional contexts; to share knowledge, best practices, and reflection on experiences across participating campuses; to facilitate the incorporation of additional colleges and universities into this enterprise; and to sustain an extended program for the exploration of vocation.

Among NetVUE members are institutions with both formal and historic ties to a wide variety of Protestant, Catholic, and other religious bodies, as well as institutions with wholly secular traditions. Lilly Endowment funded the creation of NetVUE in 2009. It is part of Lilly Endowment’s nearly two-decade commitment to supporting efforts at colleges, universities, and seminaries that help young people tap into religious and theological traditions as they consider academic, career, and personal choices.
“David has been engaged in many facets of work involving the theological reflection on vocation, from teaching and advising students to producing groundbreaking research,” said Dr. Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president of religion. “His significant experience with NetVUE will be valuable as he guides its future efforts to enhance the vocational discernment of young people throughout the country.”

Cunningham will succeed Shirley J. Roels, who has directed NetVUE since its establishment in 2009. Under Roels’ leadership, NetVUE launched with a quick start, enrolling 125 colleges and universities as founding members in its first several months, more than doubling initial projections. Since then the network has expanded rapidly, adding additional member institutions as well as new programs and services. Having served as professor of management at Calvin College, where she also directed Calvin’s PTEV project, Roels has directed NetVUE from a national office at Calvin. Following her retirement from the NetVUE director role, Roels will continue to serve as a CIC senior advisor for NetVUE during the ensuing year.

More information about NetVUE programs, services, and membership is available at www.cic.edu/NetVUE.

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The Council of Independent Colleges is an association of 765 nonprofit independent colleges and universities and higher education affiliates and organizations that has worked since 1956 to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of private higher education’s contributions to society. CIC is the major national organization that focuses on providing services to leaders of independent colleges and universities as well as conferences, seminars, and other programs that help institutions to improve educational quality, administrative and financial performance, and institutional visibility. CIC conducts the largest annual conferences of college and university presidents and of chief academic officers. CIC also provides support to state associations that organize programs and generate contributions for private colleges and universities. The Council is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. www.cic.edu