NetVUE Vocation across the Academy Grants

Invitation for Applications

Deadline: March 13, 2020

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) invites college and university members of the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) that meet certain requirements to apply for grants that will expand an institution’s ongoing program for vocational exploration and discernment. The goal of the program is to include more faculty members and students in this work and to foster collaboration among offices across the campus. This initiative is administered by CIC with the generous support of Lilly Endowment Inc.

The Opportunity

Undergraduates today are increasingly preoccupied with postgraduate employment. This development has led to an increasing emphasis on the role of career services offices in the undergraduate student experience. According to the Higher Education Research Institute (2016), students are more likely to want college to make them “well-off financially” than to “develop a meaningful philosophy of life”—reversing the pattern that existed only two decades ago. Still, one major purpose of an undergraduate education in the liberal arts is to help students, usually early in their college careers, shape a philosophy of life through coursework in the humanities and social sciences, as well as to prepare for a career. The purposes of this grant program are: (a) to help students develop more effective links between developing a philosophy of life and preparing for a career; (b) to include more faculty and

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students in activities that promote the theological and intellectual exploration of vocation; and, in some cases, (c) to build connections between colleges and community partners, such as local businesses, nonprofits, and other community organizations, that can reinforce the dual goals of education for careers and for life.

Tensions between study of the liberal arts and preprofessional education are not new, although the need for better ways of reconciling them has become more urgent. While vocational exploration programs show great promise in addressing this tension, the challenge is to develop—through reexamination of the curriculum, cocurriculum, and advising—a framework for vocational exploration that will remain durable as both the liberal arts and the professions continue to evolve.

CIC invites proposals from member colleges and universities to develop institution-wide undergraduate initiatives that expand vocational exploration across the liberal arts and applied professional fields. This expansion may be focused on course offerings, cocurricular programming, efforts that connect students to the local community, or any other aspect of the student experience. Proposals may focus on upper-level undergraduates, lower-division study, or both. Initiatives that seek to integrate vocational exploration as a continuum from the first year through the senior year are especially encouraged.

Examples of programs that show promise for funding through a Vocation across the Academy grant include:

- Expansion of approaches to vocational reflection that are not limited to a particular profession and are informed by knowledge of likely career trajectories;
- Improved integration of advising throughout the undergraduate years, including support for reflective and effective transitions from college into graduate study or the workforce;
- Efforts that help form the vocational commitments of students in conversation with significant texts in philosophy, history, literature, and theology, and in ways that prepare them for ethical professional practices;
- Strengthened career services programming through partnership with outside organizations throughout the undergraduate years; and
- Integration of vocational exploration with active learning through academic internships, community engaged learning, and undergraduate research.

Vocation across the Academy grants will be awarded based on proposals that explain (a) the purpose and goals of the proposed activities and their relationship to the ongoing vocational exploration program of the institution, (b) the extent of institutional support for vocational exploration efforts to date, (c) the proposed enhancements this grant would support, and (d) the ways in which the NetVUE-supported program would be sustained by the institution for at least one year after the grant period.
**Funding Plan**

Vocation across the Academy Grants are intended to support projects that last a minimum of four years. Grant funding will be available to support the first three years of the project; however, applications will need to describe a four-year plan that includes funding from institutional sources for the fourth year. In the project’s first year, grant funding of up to $25,000 will be awarded. Recipients will be required to raise third-party matching gifts in an amount equal to the initial award by the end of the first year. Upon fulfillment of the matching requirement, the institution will receive a bonus award equal to the initial award amount (up to $25,000), to be used toward project costs in the grant’s second and third years. Thus, the entire funding from CIC and third-party sources may be up to $75,000 for the three years of grant-supported work.

The matching requirement is intended to assist institutions secure new donors and to encourage previous donors to fund new projects. The matching funds must be specifically designated to support activities proposed for the second and third years of the project and must be received by the end of the first year. Pledges are not sufficient, nor may previously-received gifts be repurposed to count toward the required third-party match. In addition, because the grant is designed to increase the institution’s capacity to sustain the new program, the institution must make a firm commitment to support a fourth year of activity and must include a budget for this fourth year that relies entirely on institutional funds.

Examples of allowable expenses include (a) released time for one or more project leaders to coordinate the activities of this grant, (b) mini-grants for instructors to design new courses, (c) workshops or retreats for faculty members and staff members, (d) reading materials and other resources for use during the grant period, and (e) student events led by faculty members, other campus leaders, and/or community partners, including reading materials and refreshments for these events. Some expenses are ineligible for grant support; for details, please consult the Grant Budget Guidelines document on the NetVUE website.

**Special Initiative: Vocation across the Academy Community Partnerships**

This year for the first time, CIC will award additional Vocation across the Academy grants that have a focus on building partnerships within the local community. Vocation across the Academy grants that have a community partnership focus have the same award amounts, eligibility rules, and application procedures.

This additional opportunity within the Vocation across the Academy grant program is designed to help colleges and universities develop more effective ways to strengthen the link between career preparation and one’s philosophy of life through partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations that more closely tie students’ vocational exploration to their professional preparation and career discernment.
Proposals may focus on first year or upper division students and may build relationships with partner organizations through academic departments, campus ministry, career services, or other relevant campus offices. Proposals that foster collaboration among offices within the university in support of these community partnerships are especially encouraged.

**Eligibility and Funding Timeline**

NetVUE members are eligible for these grants no sooner than one year after the conclusion of any previous NetVUE grant (that is, any previous grant must have concluded by June 30, 2019). This is the third round of Vocation across the Academy grants. In the previous two rounds, CIC awarded grants to 33 NetVUE member institutions. The application deadline for this round is **March 13, 2020**. Decisions will be announced by May 15, 2020. Funds will be released by July 1, 2020. After delivery of an interim report and suitable documentation of receipt of matching funds by May 31, 2021, the remaining grant funds will be released.

**Expectations of Grant Recipients**

If awarded a NetVUE Vocation across the Academy Grant, the institution will agree to:

- Submit written annual progress and budget reports to CIC by May 31, 2021—that is, one year after the grant activities have begun, including documentation of matching funds received during the grant’s first year (following the guidelines provided in the award letter and agreement form)—and again by June 17, 2022;

- Provide final narrative and financial reports to CIC by August 30, 2023, describing the outcome of the project, including a reflection on the effectiveness of the initiatives during the grant period;

- Submit a final report on the project’s fourth year of institutionally-supported activities, including a description of future plans for the project, by July 31, 2024;

- Permit the inclusion of information about its project in CIC and NetVUE publications;

- Be willing to share at future NetVUE Conferences and gatherings what the institution has learned through its grant-supported activities;

- Identify the funded activities as supported by the Council of Independent Colleges and Lilly Endowment Inc. in all project materials and publicity;

- Maintain membership in NetVUE throughout the four years of the project; and

- Send a campus team headed by the president, chief academic officer, or another officer at the vice-presidential level to the 2021 and 2023 NetVUE Conferences.
Application Guidelines

Proposals should be submitted online as a single document and consist of the following components.

A One-Paragraph Executive Summary of the Proposal

A Brief Public Description of the project (five sentences maximum), which will be posted on the NetVUE website if the project is funded. Examples may be found in the listings of previously-awarded grants on the website.

A Three- to Four-Page Narrative with sections that correspond to the following points:

- The institution’s understanding of vocation as it relates to its campus mission and how this understanding guides its current vocational exploration and discernment programs, as well as their proposed development across the academy (and with community partner(s), if applying through the Community Partnership initiative);

- A description of both the challenges and the opportunities that the grant would address in the institution’s program for vocational exploration;

- For the special Community Partnership initiative, a description of both the challenges and the opportunities that the grant would address in the institution’s efforts to develop partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations;

- A statement of project goals that can be referenced and assessed both during and at the end of the grant period to evaluate project success, along with a description of indicators that would demonstrate that these goals have been met;

- A description of proposed activities during the grant period;

- A description of the institution’s strategy for raising the required institutional match;

- A statement of the institution’s willingness to share, at future NetVUE Conferences and gatherings, what the institution has learned through its grant-supported activities;

- A statement of how the institution will continue the enhanced vocation initiative during the project’s fourth year, after the three-year funding period has concluded; and

- A plan for assessment and evaluation of the project both during and at the end of the grant period.

A One-Page Project Timeline
A One-Page Roster that lists the names and contact information for (a) the principal project contact; (b) the senior (cabinet-level) administrator who will oversee the project; (c) the project’s leaders, including short descriptions of their qualifications for the specified roles; and (d) the individuals who will carry out the project, including a one-sentence description of each person’s role.

A Concise Budget for all four project years, to include allocation of all grant and matching funds during the three-year grant period as well as institutional funds to be used in support of the project over its four-year span. The budget should list the main expense categories, including programmatic expenses, faculty and staff stipends or released time, honoraria for speakers and/or writers, meals and travel for meetings, and costs of materials and supplies. Details about eligible expenses and the construction of the budget, as well as answers to frequently asked budget questions and a sample budget, are available in the Grant Budget Guidelines document on the NetVUE website.

A Letter of Support from the president indicating the institution’s commitment to sustain the activities that would be supported with a NetVUE grant during and after the project period and designating a member of the president’s cabinet to oversee this project. The letter also should affirm the institution’s commitment to continue NetVUE membership throughout the grant period and to send a campus team headed by the president, chief academic officer, or another officer at the vice-presidential level to the 2021 and 2023 NetVUE Conferences.

Application Deadline

The application deadline is March 13, 2020. Proposals should be submitted electronically with supporting materials as a single document at www.cic.edu/NetVUEAcademyGrant. Only applications submitted electronically will be considered.

Questions?

Questions about NetVUE Vocation across the Academy Grants should be addressed to Lynn Hunnicutt, assistant director of NetVUE, at lhunnicutt@cic.nche.edu or (253) 535-7644, or to David S. Cunningham, director of NetVUE, at dcunningham@cic.nche.edu or (616) 395-6750.