Presidential Vocation AND Institutional Mission

A yearlong program for senior administrators who are considering whether to seek a presidency

www.cic.edu/VocationMission

NOMINATION DEADLINE
February 7, 2020

SUMMER SEMINAR
July 19–22, 2020
Stevenson, WA

WINTER SEMINAR
February 22–23, 2021
Atlanta, GA
Presidential Vocation AND Institutional Mission

A yearlong program to help college and university senior administrators who are considering whether to seek a presidency—and their spouses and partners—think deeply about their own sense of vocation, the significance of the mission of an institution they might lead, and how alignment between personal vocation and institutional mission fosters effective presidential leadership.

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WHY THIS PROGRAM?

How one does the work of a college president is an essential question. Why one takes up the presidency as a calling in life is even more important and should be asked and answered first.

This is the premise of the yearlong seminar-based Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program offered by the Council of Independent Colleges. In this program, a small cohort of college and university senior administrators and their spouses or partners join together to read and think deeply about meaning and purpose in life as those values are applied to the presidency in independent higher education. At the same time, participants read and think about what makes the mission of one college or university different from that of another.

WHY MIGHT YOU SEE YOURSELF IN A PRESIDENCY? Why at this point in your life? Where should you serve? Why might differences in mission matter to you as you look for an alignment of person and institution? Why might your sense of calling be attractive to some colleges and not others? Why should any of this matter to the spouse or partner of someone seeking a presidency?

BUT ALSO, WHY THIS APPROACH? CIC strongly believes and experience confirms that presidential leadership and institutional success are strengthened by the congruence of institutional mission and presidential vocation. All too often, presidencies are cut short by a misalignment between vocation and mission. This program aims to help those likely to be future presidents achieve great things for their institutions and avoid being “the right person in the wrong place.” Although occasionally participants determine that their calling is not to a presidency, a remarkable 35 percent of past participants have become college presidents. CIC’s Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program provides the opportunity for the inquiry, reflection, and discernment necessary to build a solid foundation for a first presidency—an essential step to enjoy career fulfillment, personal and family wellness, and institutional success.
“As a result of the program, I began my successful search for a presidency with clarity about the need to find alignment between an institution’s mission and my own sense of vocation. I believe my candidacy for positions was strengthened by this knowledge. The program facilitators offered invaluable counsel throughout the seminar, and my seminar colleagues encouraged me during the search process.”

— BARBARA FARLEY, PRESIDENT OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE AND FORMER CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER, AUGSBURG UNIVERSITY
WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?

Participants in the Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program should currently hold a senior leadership position at a CIC member institution.

In many cases they have the rank of vice president or provost. Successful “prospective presidents” have come from all major functional areas of college leadership, including academic affairs, finance and administration, student life, enrollment and student success, and advancement. Deans who report to the president also will be strong candidates. Although there are exceptions, successful nominees are usually in at least the third year of service in their current role. Persons whose responsibilities would typically be regarded as two or more steps from a presidency are less likely to be selected.

Participants need not be actively engaged in the presidential search process to participate. This program has space for those who feel confident that the presidency is in their future and for those who are unsure.

Spouses and partners are strongly encouraged to engage fully in this exploration. Even though a presidential spouse may serve in a variety of capacities within the institution and outside it, including maintaining a separate professional career, the presidency has profound implications for marital and family life. Each cohort includes approximately 20 prospective presidents, and most participate with a spouse or partner.

HOW WILL I BENEFIT?

This program will give you a language for talking about your values and passions. If you are in a marriage or partnership, it will provide the two of you with an informed opportunity to explore together what serving in a presidency might mean. It will offer you a window into thinking about what might make an institution distinctive. It will provide you with new allies in the journey of discernment—both the CIC facilitators working closely with you and your fellow seminar participants. In short, it will strengthen your ability to secure and sustain a presidency.

Since 2005, approximately one-third of participants in the Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program have gone on to serve as college and university presidents. It is typical of participants that they choose the searches they enter based on their discernment of where there is a likelihood of sufficient alignment between their talents and commitments and an institution’s characteristics. CIC believes that this kind of thoughtful matching is a common feature of longer, more satisfying, and more successful presidencies.
“This program was tremendously helpful in my career discernment. For Alan and me, it was a unique opportunity to evaluate our next steps within the context of calling and purpose and to consider what service would mean to us in the future. We benefited from the guidance of experienced facilitators and met peer colleagues who became friends. Their ongoing support continues to undergird our work, and we are extremely grateful for what the program provided to us.”

—DEBBIE COTTRELL, PRESIDENT AND FORMER VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, TEXAS LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY
HOW IS THIS PROGRAM STRUCTURED?

Through seminars, discussions, consultations, and extensive reading, a team of facilitators—experienced presidents and their spouses—guide participants in this inquiry over the course of one year.

Program participants gather twice for group seminars. The first seminar takes place over four days in the summer, and the second lasts for a day and a half in the winter. Participants read assigned materials in advance of each seminar. Each participating individual or couple also has at least three telephone consultations with members of the facilitator team spaced out over the program year.

Many practical aspects of the presidential search process deliberately are not part of this program. We do not practice interviewing or meet with search consultants. Other programs do those things well. What we intentionally do is read, reflect, discuss, discern, and talk about the applications of these activities to each participant’s life and career. The purpose is to help participants gain a better understanding of how to discern both an institution’s mission and their own calling.

SUMMER SEMINAR
July 19-22, 2020
Skamania Lodge
Stevenson, WA

WINTER SEMINAR
February 22-23, 2021
Emory Conference Center
Atlanta, GA

For the first time, the Summer Seminar will be held at the Skamania Lodge, situated in scenic Stevenson, Washington, on the Columbia River Gorge, just 45 minutes outside of Portland, Oregon, and 20 minutes from the famous Multnomah Falls.
“I loved the variety of readings and the diversity of participants. Each of us brought different skills, experiences, talents, and perspectives, which made the seminar discussions engaging and valuable. It highlighted the variety and value of the independent college network.”

— HARRY DUMAY, PRESIDENT OF ELMS COLLEGE AND FORMER VICE PRESIDENT FOR FINANCE, SAINT ANSELM COLLEGE
Sample Seminar Topics

The seminar topics and readings vary each year. These past examples illustrate the program’s distinctive approach to the process of considering a college presidency.

Early in the Summer Seminar, participants break into four groups and discuss texts such as:

The discussion focuses on understanding vocation and participants consider questions such as: What are significant challenges to vocation as a framework for life?

Toward the end of the summer gathering, participants meet to discuss the public nature of a college presidency—informed by these texts:
- Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address” (speech)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., “Where Do We Go from Here?” (speech excerpts)
- Hugh Heclo, “George Washington’s Mind” (excerpt from *On Thinking Institutionally*)

The discussion focuses on how to inspire and how to lead with vocation.

Other authors include Abigail and John Adams, Aristotle, Wendell Berry, Jill Ker Conway, Louise Erdrich, Homer, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Eboo Patel, and Amy Tan. The readings are deliberately eclectic—including the ancient and modern, the contemporary and classic, spiritual and secular—and are analytical, reflective, and creative.

Program Facilitators

*Program Director: Frederik Ohles*, president emeritus of Nebraska Wesleyan University (2007–2019)

*Program Facilitators: These individuals served as facilitators for the 2019–2020 program. CIC will announce the facilitators for the 2020–2021 program in spring 2020.*

**Jane Easter Bahls**, presidential spouse, Augustana College (IL) (since 2003)

**Steven C. Bahls**, president, Augustana College (IL) (since 2003)

**Donna M. Carroll**, president, Dominican University (IL) (since 1994)

**Christopher L. Holoman**, president, Centenary College of Louisiana (since 2016)

**Constance Currier Holoman**, presidential spouse, Centenary College of Louisiana (since 2016)

DEADLINE AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Nominations received by February 7, 2020, will be given priority consideration. Selected participants will be notified by March 16, 2020. Nominators and prospective participants can direct questions about the program to Frederik Ohles, CIC senior advisor and program director, by email at fohles@ic.nche.edu or to Harold V. Hartley III, CIC senior vice president, by telephone at (202) 466-7230 or email at hhartley@ic.nche.edu.

The following criteria will be used to select participants:

• Evidence that the nominee has had significant relevant experience and has demonstrated the potential to serve with success as a college president in the next step of his or her career;

• Evidence that the nominee has reflected on his or her own sense of vocation, has contemplated the relevance of institutional mission for the presidency, and is prepared to engage in frank and open discussion of these matters with other program participants;

• Evidence that the nominee takes a broad view of the issues involved in fulfilling the expectations of a college or university presidency; and

• The nominee’s likely contribution to the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the program.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Frederik Ohles
fohles@ic.nche.edu

Harold V. Hartley III
(202) 466-7230
hhartley@ic.nche.edu
HOW TO BE CONSIDERED

Senior administrators of CIC member institutions, typically at the level of vice president or provost with three years or more experience in their present role, are eligible to be nominated for the Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program. Selection for participation in the program is available by a nomination from your current president only.

Presidents who wish to nominate one of their current senior team members for participation in the 2020–2021 Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program are asked to submit a nomination packet online at www.cic.edu/VocationMission. Nominations consist of the following items:

A NOMINATION COVER FORM that includes contact information for the nominee and nominator as well as professional and personal information about the nominee, including whether a spouse or partner intends to participate in the program;

A LETTER OF NOMINATION from the president of the nominee’s current institution that addresses the nominee’s potential readiness for the presidency and how the nominee will benefit from participation in this program with its distinctive attention to presidential vocation and institutional mission. The letter also should indicate the president’s willingness to support the nominee’s participation in the yearlong program;

A REFLECTIVE STATEMENT of no more than two pages prepared by the nominee that discusses (a) his or her own sense of personal vocation; (b) the role of mission in higher education; and (c) anticipated benefits—considered in the spirit of this program—for the nominee and spouse or partner as well as institutions he or she might serve. Reviewers will carefully consider how well the nominee’s statement addresses the selection criteria (see criteria in blue box on adjacent page); and

The nominee’s CURRICULUM VITAE.

Program Costs

Thanks to a generous grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., most expenses, including travel stipends for both the Summer and Winter Seminars as well as lodging, meals, consultations, and materials during the program, will be covered by CIC for participants and their spouses or partners. There is a one-time registration fee of $400 for the prospective president and $250 for an accompanying spouse or partner due upon acceptance into the program.