PRESIDENTIAL VOCATION AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

A Program for Prospective College and University Presidents

Designed for college and university senior administrators who are considering whether to seek a presidency—and their spouses and partners—the program helps participants 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. Supported by Lilly Endowment Inc.

NOMINATION DEADLINE: February 8, 2018
CIC’s Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission is a seminar-based program whose purpose is to help prospective college and university presidents—and their spouses or partners—clarify their sense of personal vocation and weigh it in the context of the missions of institutions they might lead in the future. Through a series of structured conversations, participants explore the ways in which greater understanding and alignment of personal vocation and institutional mission can contribute to effective presidential leadership. The program, funded by a generous grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., will include up to 20 participants and their spouses or partners.

The Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program seeks to increase the commitment across American higher education to vocation and mission as fundamentally linked concepts for building and sustaining successful presidencies in independent colleges and universities. The program rests on two premises:

• Presidential leadership is strengthened by a congruence of institutional mission and presidential vocation; and

• Carefully structured opportunities for reflection and dialogue can help potential presidents, along with their spouses or partners, envision their prospective roles.

Why have such a program? Even the most successful presidents often note wistfully the lack of balance between their professional and personal lives. The alignment of vocation and mission presented in this program offers an alternative to “balance.” All too often, presidencies are cut short by a misalignment between personal vocation and institutional mission. For example, imagine a highly participatory campus culture in which a “visionary” president makes insightful but unilateral pronouncements on what needs to change. Or consider a troubled college steeped in tradition with a reforming president who was charged by the board of trustees to make major changes.

“Alignment” is not to be confused with “identical” or even “profoundly alike.” Some presidents of religiously affiliated colleges whose personal faith tradition differs from those of the institution have achieved long tenure and wide acclaim because they adopted the cause of the college that selected them. Traditional institutions have been carefully led to revise their missions and structures by thoughtful presidents who understood future needs while respecting past traditions. Alignment is about personal and educational purpose, the relationship between belief and reason, and the nature of the learning community.

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 34 percent of past participants have become a college president.

“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. The facilitators offered invaluable counsel throughout the seminar, and my seminar colleagues encouraged me during the search process.”

—Barbara Farley, President, Illinois College, and Former Chief Academic Officer, Augsburg College
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Presidential Vocation. Individuals often bring a deep sense of vocation or calling to the work of leading a specific college or university. One important dimension of a presidency is to discover ways in which the individual's vocation connects with—and may be animated by—the institution's mission. Understood in this way, vocation is not about a job or a career but about commitments that are personal in combination with obligations that are public. A sense of vocation also is likely to have multiple origins, representing a unique combination of an individual’s experiences and professional competence. In addition, a vocational commitment can provide an appreciation for the kinds of endeavors that offer personal satisfaction, a sense of meaning, and, in many cases, a spiritually grounded belief about the importance of the work as president. Such a calling offers the promise of self-knowledge at a level that can contribute significantly to presidential success.

Institutional Mission. The mission of a college or university springs from multiple sources. It may include a particular educational philosophy, the values of a founding religious denomination or pioneering educator, the history of a place or region, and distinctive characteristics of the students served. Each institution, as a result, has a self-definition that comes to life in oft-repeated stories, beloved campus features, cherished events, and memories of respected individuals. Presidents, to a greater extent than others at the institution, must be able to understand, appreciate, learn from, and represent these facets of institutional mission. Indeed, they must refine and extend the mission through the work of their administration and, of course, through their rhetoric or, in Burton Clark’s words, the “saga” of the institution.

Spouses. Spouses and partners are strongly encouraged to engage fully in this exploration and to participate in every session of the seminar. Whether or not a spouse takes on responsibilities that have traditionally been expected of the president’s wife or husband, the presidency has profound implications for marital life. The program operates on the premise that each participant has his or her own vocation. Coming to discern one’s own calling can contribute significantly to a sense of fulfillment, whether in the role of presidential spouse or in any other occupation.

Ninth Offering. This program, offered in 2018–2019 for the ninth time, provides up to 20 nominees and their spouses or partners with the opportunity for candid, intense, small-group discussion among their peers about presidential vocation and institutional mission. Guiding the discussions will be facilitators—experienced college presidents and spouses—who have thought deeply about matters of personal vocation and institutional mission as they relate to the college and university presidency—from both religious and secular perspectives.

“It is remarkable to think how much we accomplished in such a short time. The meeting helped me crystalize and further my thinking in conjunction with my spouse and the other participants. The community of participants is a great resource.”

—Susan Agre-Kippenhan, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, Linfield College
PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Before the Summer Seminar (Late Spring 2018)
Participants will read a selection of short essays and book excerpts in preparation for the Summer Seminar.

Summer Seminar (July 8–11, 2018)
A Summer Seminar will be held over four days at the historic Woodstock Inn & Resort, situated in picturesque Woodstock, Vermont, amidst the Green Mountains. Please review the outline of sample seminar topics and readings as well as program facilitators included in this brochure.

Between the Summer Seminar and the Winter Seminar
During the fall, each participant will have two telephone consultations with one of the seminar facilitators. The purpose of these consultations for prospective presidents will be to consider how their reflections on vocation and mission following the Summer Seminar have influenced their evaluation of potential opportunities to serve as president. Participants will read several additional selections before the Winter Seminar.

Winter Seminar (February 25–26, 2019)
This event, held at the Emory Conference Center in Atlanta, Georgia, will extend the experience of the Summer Seminar, incorporating reflections based on the fall consultations with facilitators and a set of new readings.

After the Winter Seminar (Spring 2019)
Each participant will have one telephone consultation with a seminar facilitator during the spring. The final consultation will address the following topics:

- Changes in participants' sense of personal vocation and understanding of institutional mission;
- Benefits realized from participation in the program; and
- Future plans in light of the program.

PROGRAM FACILITATORS

Program Director
Frederik Ohles, president of Nebraska Wesleyan University (2007–present)

Program Facilitators
Donna M. Carroll, president of Dominican University (IL) (1994–present)


Trudy Cunningham, former presidential spouse of Sewanee: The University of the South (2000–2010) and former associate dean of engineering at Bucknell University

Rosemary Ohles, presidential spouse of Nebraska Wesleyan University (2007–present)

Mary Ellen Summerlin, former presidential spouse of Schreiner University (2001–2016)

Tim Summerlin, former president of Schreiner University (2001–2016)

The American College Presidency as Vocation: Easing the Burden, Enhancing the Joy (2013), written by William V. Frame, founding program director and president emeritus of Augsburg University, is a report on the first five years of the Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program. The book describes the deep questions and keen insights that can help presidents—and those who aspire to the presidency—align their own values and commitments with the missions of the institutions they serve.
The following topics and readings, based on the syllabi of previous seminars, are representative of what will be included in the 2018–2019 program. Final details will be available in spring 2018.

**Understanding Vocation**  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*  
David Brooks, “The Summoned Self” from the *New York Times*  
Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*  
Mark R. Schwehn and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., selections from *Leading Lives That Matter*

**Vocation, Service, and Calling**  
Mary Catherine Bateson, *Composing a Further Life*  
Wendell Berry, “A Jonquil for Mary Penn” from *Fidelity: Five Stories*  
Frederick Buechner, *Now and Then*  
Hugh Heclo, *On Thinking Institutionally*

**Discerning Vocation**  
Book of Genesis, selections  
Henri Nouwen, *Discernment*  
Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith*

**Vision, Mission, and the Institution**  
Burton R. Clark, *The Distinctive College: Antioch, Reed & Swarthmore*  
Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*  
Jill Ker Conway, *True North*  
William V. Frame, “A President Looks Back 500 Years and Finds His Calling” from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*

**Vocation and Community**  
David Brooks, “Becoming a Real Person” from the *New York Times*  
Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*  
Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

**Vocation and Friendship**  
Aristotle, “On Friendship” from *The Nicomachean Ethics*  
Letters of Abigail and John Adams in 1776  
Homer, selections from *The Odyssey*  
John Keats, “To Charles Cowden Clarke”

**The “Vocationalist” as a Public Figure**  
Alexis de Tocqueville, selections from *Democracy in America*  
Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1865

**Vocation, Mission, and Alignment**  
Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*  
Wendell Berry, *Hannah Coulter*  
Thomas Merton, *No Man Is an Island*  
Selected writings by Gwendolyn Brooks, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, Rainer Maria Rilke, May Sarton, William Shakespeare, and William Wordsworth

The Summer Seminar meeting will be held over four days at the historic Woodstock Inn & Resort, situated in picturesque Woodstock, Vermont, amidst the Green Mountains.

“I loved the variety of readings and the diversity of attendees. Each of us brought different skills, experiences, talents, and perspectives. It highlighted the variety and value of the independent college network.”  
—Harry Dumay, President, Elms College, and Former Vice President for Finance, Saint Anselm College
NOMINATION PROCEDURE

Senior administrators of CIC member institutions are eligible to be nominated. Presidents who wish to nominate one of their current senior administrators for participation in the 2018–2019 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:

1. 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;

2. 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 whether the nominee’s statement addresses the selection criteria (see below);

3. The nominee’s curriculum vitae; and

4. 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 year-long program.

Nominations received by February 8, 2018, will be given priority consideration. Selected participants will be notified by March 12, 2018. Nominators and prospective participants can direct questions about the program to Frederik Ohles, CIC senior advisor and program director, by email at fohles@cic.nche.edu or to Harold V. Hartley III, CIC senior vice president, by telephone at (202) 466-7230 or email at hhartley@cic.nche.edu.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to select participants:

• Evidence that the nominee has had 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.

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.