

Telling Difficult Stories about Your Institution and Your Community

Our Ever-Widening Circle: Being and Becoming Elmhurst University | *Elmhurst University*

An “ever-widening circle” is how H. Richard Niebuhr (a 1912 graduate and our sixth president) described the evolution of Elmhurst College (now University) from its founding in 1871. The celebration of Elmhurst University’s sesquicentennial during 2021-22 and the awarding of the NetVUE Grant for Reframing the Institutional Saga represented a timely confluence of opportunities to examine our history, identity, mission, and institutional vocation. This milestone challenged us to look backward at who we were and what we’ve become, while looking forward to who we are becoming and to what we are called. Thus, our grant project was two-fold:

1. Being – examining and documenting our history as we produce an updated narrative of “An Ever-Widening Circle: The History of Elmhurst College”; and
2. Becoming – capturing our transformative journey through the “Calling All Voices” storytelling project, with a focus on digital storytelling.

This project served as a catalyst for seeking new and innovative ways to give space and voice to the narratives that have been underrepresented in telling the story of Elmhurst University. What voices are shaping the purposes and directions of our institution?



Elmhurst 150th Anniversary



Calling All Voices Podcast

Wesleyan College 1836 - 2022: 186 Years in 186 Artifacts | *Wesleyan College*

This exhibit chronicles the rich 186 year history of the college and its impact on the world through 186 archival artifacts and narratives. Through the use of these artifacts, Wesleyan's story of race, advocacy, class names, traditions, and the student experience is told. The exhibit is a continuation of work begun by Dr. Karen Huber and the HIS 358 class spring semester 2015. They worked on a project entitled "African Americans at Wesleyan College before the "First Five". In August 2016, Dr. Huber was commissioned to research the history of the college, which culminated in an all campus convocation on Racial Reconciliation where Dr. Huber presented her findings. An oral history project was undertaken by Dr. Huber, Dr. Nicholas Steneck, and their students. You will find those oral histories, and others done by this team, in the oral history section of this exhibit. In 2020, Wesleyan College was granted a "Reframing the Institutional Saga" grant from the Network of Vocational Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) through the Council of Independent Colleges. In addition to exploring the racial history of Wesleyan College, this project connects who we are today as an institution, with who we were, and explores all of the ways we have evolved over time.



186 Years in 186 Artifacts Digital Archive

Roberson Project | *Sewanee: The University of the South*

Through its Roberson Project on Slavery, Race, and Reconciliation, launched in 2017, Sewanee: The University of the South has chosen to tell the hard truths about the ways its campus commemorates and remembers slavery, the Civil War, emancipation, and segregation. In general, the Roberson Project seeks to gather and give a more complete historical account of the University of the South, the town of Sewanee, and all its people — one that sheds light on how slavery and its legacies have marked our history and that acknowledges the contributions and sacrifices of all who have shaped Sewanee’s past and present. Its myriad projects and programming promote student research, curricular innovation, collaboration with surrounding communities, and intercollegiate partnerships. A Legacies of American Slavery grant awarded by the Council of Independent Colleges and focusing on “Commemoration and Memory” has been instrumental to fulfilling these commitments, enabling Sewanee to critically examine less visible but no less influential sites of memory that have reinforced structures of white supremacy. The grant has also enabled the Roberson Project to share its knowledge and experience in ways that empower students, faculty, and archivists at other institutions to tell their own campuses’ “difficult stories.”



The Roberson Project

Locating Slavery's Legacies Database | *Sewanee: The University of the South*

In October 2023, and after nearly two years of development, the Roberson Project publicly introduced the Locating Slavery's Legacies database (<http://locatinglegacies.org>), a collaborative online repository of information about monuments and memorials linked to slavery, the Civil War, emancipation, and segregation. Research teams at twenty universities and colleges from Maryland to Texas are at work this academic year to contribute information about Lost Cause commemorations on their campuses. As the number of participating schools and the stock of information grow in coming years, we foresee this website growing into an important venue for telling and reckoning with "difficult stories."



Locating Slavery's
Legacies database

Legacies of American Slavery: Reckoning with the Past

Legacies of American Slavery: Reckoning with the Past is an initiative of the Council of Independent Colleges, administered in cooperation with the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at the MacMillan Center (Yale University). It is supported by a generous grant from the Mellon Foundation and supplemental funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Legacies of American Slavery is a multi-year project, providing a variety of opportunities for CIC member institutions, their faculty members and students, and community-based partners to participate in research, teaching and learning, and public discussions about the multiple legacies of American slavery. In 2021, CIC selected seven institutions to serve as Regional Collaboration Partners—that is, the coordinating hubs for a national network of other colleges, universities, and community partners. The Regional Collaboration Partners play an essential role in shaping and administering the national network, using funds provided by CIC. CIC also named a dozen colleges and universities as Institutional Affiliates. These institutions play a key role in developing the national network.



Legacies of
American
Slavery website

NetVUE Grants for Reframing the Institutional Saga

Many NetVUE member colleges and universities have strong historical ties to a specific religious tradition, a particular educational philosophy, or a pioneering educator. These elements of an institution's heritage are important, but their significance may not always be clear in the midst of changes in the institution's demographic profile, surrounding community, and founding organizations. These changes can influence student recruitment and retention, curriculum design, and the composition of faculty. The purpose of this grant program is to enable institutions to produce an updated account of their history and mission in light of their current context. CIC invites proposals from NetVUE member colleges and universities that seek to re-examine and reframe their commitments in ways that balance their history, identity, and heritage with attention to their present circumstances. This re-examination would enable institutions to articulate the ties between their inheritance from the past and the vocations that situate them within their current context and call them into the future. By the end of the grant period, recipients are expected to have created one or more enduring products, such as a book (whether a monograph or a collection of essays), a permanent campus exhibit accompanied by a printed catalogue, or some other physical and durable record of the results of the campus conversations, critical thinking, and reframing process. The enduring product(s) may be supported by other products (including digital and electronic ones) that reflect deep research and that may help extend the reach of the project.



NetVUE Grants for
Reframing the
Institutional Saga