



# Presidential Vocation AND Institutional Mission



Supported by Lilly Endowment Inc.

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

[www.cic.edu/VocationMission](http://www.cic.edu/VocationMission)

**NOMINATION DEADLINE**

February 4, 2022

**SUMMER SEMINAR**

July 10-13, 2022

Essex, Vermont

**WINTER SEMINAR**

February 20-21, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia

# 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*

**NOMINATION DEADLINE:** February 4, 2022

## 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. When the fit is good, everyone benefits.



*"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, 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. Individuals who would contribute to the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the program are especially encouraged to consider participating.

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.





*"Theresa and I greatly enjoyed the depth and thoroughness of the program: the readings, the facilitators, and our new colleagues all made a meaningful difference. The insights shared in the seminar and the ready advice in the years following were invaluable throughout the search process, and in commencing a presidency. This program is the premier venue for discerning a call to service as a president."*

—JOHN MCKEEGAN, PRESIDENT, MOUNT ALOYSIUS COLLEGE AND  
FORMER VICE PRESIDENT FOR INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT  
AND GENERAL COUNSEL, LINFIELD UNIVERSITY



## HOW IS THIS PROGRAM STRUCTURED?

Through seminars, small group discussions, individual 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 10-13, 2022

The Essex

Essex, Vermont

For the first time, the Summer Seminar will be held at the Essex Resort, nestled between the vistas of the Green Mountains and the splendor of Lake Champlain, just 15 minutes outside of Burlington, Vermont.

### WINTER SEMINAR

February 20-21, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia





*"So many aspects of the program, such as the readings, reflective conversations with other participants, and the coaching from former presidents, were helpful to me in clarifying the importance of my personal mission and beliefs and their alignment with an institution's mission, vision, and values. Simply stated, I would not have wanted to consider the path toward a presidency without this experience."*

—TRACY ESPY, PRESIDENT, MITCHELL COLLEGE AND FORMER  
PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS,  
PFEIFFER UNIVERSITY



## 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 meet in small groups to discuss texts such as:

- Mary Catherine Bateson, "Composing a Life Story" (book excerpt); and
- Robert Frost, "Two Tramps in Mud Time" (poem).

The discussion focuses on understandings of vocation. Participants consider questions such as: How do we discern our callings?

Several times in the summer gathering, participants meet in a large group. The topics on these occasions include the nature of a college presidency, the support presidents receive from their communities, and the importance of presidents aligning themselves with an institutional mission. Participants are informed by texts such as:

- Jill Ker Conway, "A Different Choice" (book excerpt);
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Mecca and the Death of Mythology" (book excerpt); and
- Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address" (speech).

Discussion questions include: What will help us decide where we go and when?

Other authors include diverse voices, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Eboo Patel, Abigail and John Adams, Aristotle, Louise Erdrich, Henri Nouwen, Amy Tan, Dorothy Sayers, Thomas Merton, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Vincent Harding. 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 2021–2022 program.

CIC will announce the facilitators for the 2022–2023 program in spring 2022.

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

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

**Donna M. Carroll**, president emerita, Dominican University (IL) (1994–2021)

**Alan Cottrell**, presidential spouse, Texas Lutheran University (since 2019)

**Debbie Cottrell**, president, Texas Lutheran University (since 2019)

**Harry Dumay**, president, Elms College (MA) (since 2017)

**Maggie Dumay**, presidential spouse, Elms College (MA) (since 2017)

**Rosemary Ohles**, former presidential spouse, Nebraska Wesleyan University (2007–2019)

# DEADLINE AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Nominations received by **February 4, 2022**, will be given priority consideration. Selected participants will be notified by March 25, 2022. 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](mailto: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](mailto:hhartley@cic.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 and to independent higher education leadership.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Frederik Ohles  
**[fohles@cic.nche.edu](mailto:fohles@cic.nche.edu)**

Harold V. Hartley III  
**(202) 466-7230**  
**[hhartley@cic.nche.edu](mailto:hhartley@cic.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 2022-2023 Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission program are asked to submit a nomination packet online at [www.cic.edu/VocationMission](http://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) the nominee's own sense of personal vocation; (b) the role of mission in higher education; (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; and (d) if relevant, the diversity of thought, experience, or person they would bring to the program cohort. Reviewers will carefully consider how well the nominee's statement addresses the selection criteria (see criteria 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.



# The Council of Independent Colleges

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