



Vocation across the Academy Grants

Invitation for Applications

Deadline: April 7, 2023

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 the 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.

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 shape a philosophy of life through coursework in the humanities and social sciences, as well as to prepare for a career.

The Council of Independent Colleges is grateful to Lilly Endowment Inc. for its generous support of this program.

The purposes of this grant program are: (a) to help students develop more effective links between their emerging philosophy of life and career preparation; (b) to include more faculty and students in activities that promote vocational reflection and discernment; and, in some cases, (c) to build connections between colleges and community partners, such as local businesses, nonprofits, or other civic and cultural organizations in the vicinity, in order to deepen the institution's engagement with the goals of the grant program.

Tensions between study of the liberal arts and professional preparation are not new, but 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 reflection and discernment 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 into college and 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 local 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 institution's ongoing vocational exploration programs, (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 beyond the grant period.

Funding Plan

Vocation across the Academy grants are intended to support projects that last a minimum of four years. Grant funding supports the first three years of the project; however, applications must 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 \$30,000 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 \$30,000), 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 \$90,000 for the three years of grant-supported work.

The matching requirement is intended to help institutions secure new donors and encourage previous donors to fund new projects. Donors must specifically designate matching gifts to support activities proposed for the project, and matching funds 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 third-party match. Institutions are expected to use this grant to increase their capacity to sustain such programs, to make a firm commitment to support a fourth year of activity, and to 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 similar resources for use during the grant period, and (e) student events led by campus leaders and/or community partners, including reading materials and refreshments for these events. For examples of allowable expenses, as well as those which are ineligible for grant support, please consult the Grant Budget Guidelines document on the NetVUE website.

Special Initiative: Vocation across the Academy Community Partnerships

CIC will award additional Vocation across the Academy grants for proposals that focus on building partnerships within the local community. Vocation across the Academy grants with this focus have the same eligibility rules and application procedures, but may be requested for amounts up to \$35,000, with an expectation of a donor match and a potential bonus award of the same amount, for a total of up to \$105,000 in CIC and third-party funding.

This additional opportunity within the Vocation across the Academy grant program is designed to help colleges and universities strengthen the link between career preparation and one's philosophy of life through partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, and civic and cultural organizations. The goal of these partnerships is to help students understand the larger community context within which hope to live out their callings, not only in terms of career and professional preparation, but also with respect to issues of meaning, purpose, and identity.

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 this grant program if, at the time of application, they do not hold (or have already been awarded and are about to hold) a NetVUE Professional Development Award or Program Development Grant. This is the sixth round of Vocation across the Academy grants. In the previous five rounds, CIC awarded grants to 66 NetVUE member institutions. The application deadline for this round is **April 7, 2023**. Decisions will be announced in June 2023. Funds will be released in July 2023 for use over a three-year period. An interim report and documentation of receipt of matching funds is due by May 31, 2024; after approval, matching grant funds will be released. All spending from grant and donor funds must be completed by June 30, 2026.

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, 2024 (toward the end of the first year of grant activities). This report must include documentation of matching funds received during the grant's first year (following the guidelines provided in the grant agreement form). A second interim report is due by June 13, 2025;
- Provide narrative and final financial reports to CIC by August 28, 2026, describing the outcome of the project, including a reflection on the effectiveness of the initiatives during the grant period;
- Submit a final narrative report on the project's fourth year of institutionally-supported activities, including a description of future plans for the project, by July 30, 2027;
- Permit the inclusion of information about its project in CIC and NetVUE publications;
- Be willing to share—at future NetVUE Conferences, regional/topical gatherings, online events, and other venues—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 2024 and 2026 NetVUE Conferences.

Application Guidelines

Proposals should be submitted online as a single document and consist of the following components. Please use a 12-point font and standard 1” margins for legibility.

A One-Paragraph Executive Summary of the Proposal (one half page maximum)

A Brief Public Description of the project (six sentences maximum), which will be posted on the NetVUE website if the project is funded. Please consult earlier examples, which may be found in the listings of previously awarded grants on the NetVUE website.

A Four- to Five-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;
- A description of the institution’s strategy for encouraging program participation among students across demographic and socio-economic categories, with special attention to student groups that have traditionally been underrepresented, marginalized, or otherwise unable to participate in vocational exploration programs;
- For proposals submitted under the 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 civic and cultural organizations, and to use these partnerships to foster vocational reflection and discernment among its students;
- 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, along with a plan for assessment and evaluation of the project, both during and following its implementation;
- A description of proposed activities during the grant period;
- A description of the institution’s strategy for raising the required donor match;
- A statement of the institution’s willingness to share outcomes, lessons learned, and newfound expertise gained through grant activities at future NetVUE Conferences, regional/topical gatherings, online activities, and other venues; and
- 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.

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; (d) the advancement officer who will work with project leaders to raise the required matching funds; and (e) the individuals who will carry out the project, including a one-sentence description of each person's role. **Note:** Institutions that currently hold a NetVUE Grant for Reframing the Institutional Saga should clearly explain how staffing responsibilities and other resources are to be distributed in ways that would allow both projects to succeed.

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. Budgets should list the expense categories for each year of the project separately, 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. Budgets should clearly distinguish grant funds, matching funds, and institutional contributions in each line item. Applicants are expected to follow rigorously the rules about eligible expenses and the construction of the budget, in the Grant Budget Guidelines document on the NetVUE website, where answers to frequently asked questions and a sample budget are also available.

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 2024 and 2026 NetVUE Conferences.

Application Deadline

The application deadline is **April 7, 2023**. Proposals and supporting materials should be submitted electronically as a single document at www.cic.edu/NetVUEAcademyGrant. Proposals can be considered only if they are submitted through this system.

Questions?

Questions about NetVUE Vocation across the Academy grants (including the Community Partnership initiative) should be addressed to Carter Aikin, NetVUE grant director, at caikin@cic.edu or (217) 854-5619, or to David S. Cunningham, director of NetVUE, at dcunningham@cic.edu or (616) 632-1060.