

Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education Program Development Grants

Awarded in November 2019 ☞ Funding for 2020–2022

Alma College (MI) will develop a comprehensive institutional initiative to support vocational programming entitled *Cultivating a Culture of Vocational Reflection*. This program will seek 1) to incorporate vocational conversations into academic advising to support retention of students who are either undecided regarding their degree program or whose academic abilities do not coincide with their stated interests; 2) to support a cohesive and systematic first year experience with vocational programming regarding meaning and purpose as central to the curriculum, 3) to cultivate a shared campus language and understanding regarding ways to help students find their purpose and path, and facilitate stronger relationships between faculty and student affairs staff in supporting this work; and 4) to contribute to the NetVUE conversation regarding the ways in which reflection and a sense of purpose support a reflective campus community.

Catawba College (KY) will renew its emphasis on an education that encourages students to discern their vocations through consideration of their values and sense of calling. The college will create an “onboarding” process that will provide mentoring and instruction for new hires and selected current faculty members and staff. These individuals will, in turn, provide leadership for expanded freshman retreats, vocational mini-retreats, and other programs supported by the college’s Lilly Center, all of which will contribute to the goals of vocational discernment and values development. These leaders will then become mentors and sponsors for new members of the institution and provide an ongoing support system for a culture of vocation at Catawba.

Drury University (MO) will develop and expand its existing Robert and Mary Cox Compass Center to promote robust vocational exploration among all undergraduate students. It will develop a faculty advising fellows program, through which an annual cohort of seven faculty advising fellows will work in partnership with the Center’s staff to develop campus advising resources, generate vocation-specific benchmarks for students, and participate in events and workshops aimed at deepening understanding of vocational exploration throughout the faculty and the student body. By the end of the grant period, over half of all Drury faculty will have served as faculty advising fellows or been involved in Compass Center programming.

Lipscomb University (TN) will ask all new faculty to participate in four half-day seminars on vocation over the course of their first academic year. In addition, new faculty will be required to attend a one-day retreat, where they will be introduced to the idea of vocation, explore how that idea intersects with faith and learning, and consider the meaning of vocation for their students and for themselves as teachers and scholars. In addition, a committee of faculty leaders will explore ways to integrate vocational reflection into its first-year experience program, and will lead a one-day retreat for faculty who teach in this program. Grant funds will also provide a similar retreat with similar objectives for members of the student life staff, providing them with the chance to consider the ways they can bring vocational reflection into their work with Lipscomb students.

Ouachita Baptist University (AR) proposes to use reflective writing across its curriculum and co-curricular programs as a tool for vocational discernment. Select faculty members will learn metacognitive methods for writing as discernment of vocation; then, through workshops, they will equip other faculty members and staff—as well as the students who work with peers as writing consultants—to help others discover their callings through reflective writing. Equipped with metacognitive pedagogy, faculty will enrich already existing interdisciplinary intensive writing courses with vocational writing reflections. They will also develop new courses using writing both to explore vocation and, eventually, to develop a certification program in writing for service, weaving together interdisciplinary elements from a variety of fields.

St. Olaf College (MN) will connect students more deeply with vocation through the college's new General Education curriculum. In order for every student to engage with vocation in coherent and compelling ways, faculty will need to expand their skills and capacities, and join their efforts with those of staff who advise, mentor, or counsel students about vocation. To foster such collaboration, the college will offer a Vocation Summit in summer 2020 for 40 faculty members and staff. Learning communities composed of these individuals will then experiment with mentoring models and pedagogical strategies that nurture vocational reflection in a wide variety of curricular and co-curricular contexts. These include academic civic engagement, undergraduate research, internships, mentoring programs, academic advising, and traditional classroom instruction.

Thiel College (PA) will create a developmental, mission-reflective pathway for students from first-year to graduation, weaving together curricular and co-curricular opportunities for reflection and vocational discernment. The program will include enhanced programming within the existing first-year experience as well as a sophomore year retreat. Additionally, the project will strengthen faculty advising through the adoption of a four-year model for student development, which will lend itself to deeper conversations about meaning and values and fosters vocational discernment. The College will embed experiential learning activities within all majors with focus on juniors and seniors. These activities will vary by discipline, but in each case will include a reflection component in which students think about how the experience relates to their desired major and eventual vocation.

Whitworth University (WA) will pilot its new Emmaus Scholars Program, which provides a select cohort of students a one-year experience of living in an intentional Christian community centered on faith, learning, justice, and vocation. Grant funds will be used to support the first two years of the Emmaus Scholars Program as a bridge to a more permanent, endowment-funded program that will be developed throughout the grant period, and fully funded by the time that grant funding ends. This program will provide cohorts of students with an integrated experience of community, spirituality, theology, and justice, which will foster holistic Christian formation and vocational discernment for participation in God's redemptive work in the world.

Wofford College (SC) will seek to employ self-care as a form of social justice pedagogy that strives to ensure that all students understand that they deserve to be sustained and restored. The program will use self-care and sustainability practices in the classroom to show how an incoming student can mitigate both the stress and anxiety embedded in transitioning to college life and the

stress and anxiety that accompany college students in vocational exploration. This will include self-care pedagogy workshops for instructors that teach incoming students in their first semester at the college. The goal of this initiative is to help students use this practice as they endeavor to find their calling, as well as in their future work lives as they sustain their commitment to the vocation that they choose.