



## Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) Professional Development Awards

Awarded in 2023 • Funding for 2023–2024

**AdventHealth University** (FL) aims to enhance the capacity and expertise of staff and faculty members to support vocational exploration among students by convening teams to develop a mission integration plan and an interactive repository of resources. Through this collaborative process, team members will receive practical resources and training to enhance their capacity to foster a safe and supportive educational environment where students can experience belonging and explore their vocation.

**Bellarmino University** (KY) recently launched a new strategic vision with five pillars to support students in 1) finding rewarding careers, 2) building critical thinking, self-agency, collaboration and character, 3) engaging with reciprocity in the local and regional community, 4) feeling a sense of belonging in a learning environment grounded in social justice, and 5) realizing their calling and purpose through a student-centered, liberal arts education. To actualize this vision, Bellarmine will host a student success summit for staff and faculty members to build community and offer workshops that translate the strategic pillars into student success, with a particular emphasis on vocation and calling, inside and outside of the classroom.

**Belmont University** (TN) will create a professional development workshop series for staff and faculty members to enhance personal understanding of vocation while embedding vocational exploration and purpose discernment into student-facing programs. Each workshop will highlight a distinctive feature of vocational exploration, with time apportioned to personal development, followed by work to integrate the concept into a specific course or co-curricular program for students. At the conclusion of the workshop series, participants will present plans for their rejuvenated course or co-curricular program in a final showcase, designed to encourage enriched experiences across campus.

**Benedict College** (SC) will invite faculty members from across campus to engage in mentoring activities with a focus on talent development for students of color. Mentors will give particularly

focused attention to access challenges and educational pathways for students of color pursuing careers in STEM fields. In monthly vocational workshops, faculty members and student mentees will work together with local and national experts to identify educational pathways, curricular programs, and social support services that promote reflection as they discern vocation and career opportunities.

**Bethany College** (KS) will engage its staff and faculty members in a process designed to identify, understand, and address barriers to vocational reflection among students, paying special attention to the perspectives of the college's growing populations of first generation, BIPOC, and Pell-eligible students. To increase understanding of the barriers to vocational thinking faced by students and to adjust pedagogical practices accordingly, this program will: support a book study group centered on texts that explore the privileged nature of much vocation talk; organize focus groups with current students to gauge how narratives of vocation resonate with them (or fail to do so); and facilitate a review of campus-wide vocational curriculum to address these challenges.

**Concordia University Irvine** (CA) seeks to develop a program for university staff members to engage in a training and development program that will empower them, as educators and mentors, to support student vocational exploration. Currently, professional development in these mentoring skills is offered only to full-time faculty members. Concordia seeks to develop a similar program for staff that they might be better equipped for, and engaged in, the vocational formation of university students.

**Concordia University, St. Paul** (MN) will develop and implement co-curricular vocational programming in the form of a spring vocational retreat and a luncheon series focused on exploring possible majors. Both programs will aim to support and advance student vocational conversations between faculty members and students in the Concordia community. This program seeks to develop new ways to train staff and faculty members to have vocational conversations with students, and to help them consider how best to engage students in meaningful vocational conversations early in their academic careers.

**Connecticut College** will provide staff and faculty members with the opportunity to examine more deeply the multifaceted dimensions of vocation for the purpose of better supporting undocumented students. The program will engage a leading scholar (whose focus is on understanding the experiences of undocumented students) who will train and build capacity in advising teams associated with first-year seminars and student groups. As staff and faculty members grow in their understanding, the project will seek ways of better supporting DACA and undocumented students, in order to advance opportunities for vocational exploration during their undergraduate years.

**Dillard University** (LA) will advance its mission of educating students to be next-generation leaders in their careers. This grant project seeks to support faculty members as they develop and implement tools of student formation that support one of the university's strategic initiatives: to increase student engagement in vocational exploration in a way that supports a growth in

knowledge and skills connected to their future work. Newly developed pedagogical tools will be implemented in special topics and senior seminar courses and evaluated for future improvement.

**Eastern Nazarene College** (MA) will develop a shared understanding of vocation and design a culturally responsive vocational exploration standard to meet the needs of all students, with special attention to those who are minoritized and underrepresented. This program includes a retreat in which staff and faculty members will reflect on their own vocational journeys and begin to discuss a common language for vocation. Further education and training toward these goals will continue in the form of workshops, a speaker series, small group learning communities, and engagement with graduates of the institution.

**Emmanuel College** (MA) will promote the exploration of vocation in both its religious and professional dimensions through a retreat and a reading group for staff and faculty members. This program will also include a series of workshops for mission and ministry staff to become more familiar with the concept of vocation in order to better support students in their vocational journeys. These workshops will be led by representatives of religious institutions and social justice organizations to facilitate a better understanding of the resources available, both on and off campus.

**Grand View University** (IA) proposes a professional development project that will lead to more inclusive vocational discernment experiences for all students and formalize a shared vocabulary and framework for vocation. Patrick Reyes's book, *The Purpose Gap: Empowering Communities of Color to Find Meaning and Thrive*, will be the foundation for small groups of staff and faculty members to discuss strategies to create inclusive vocational discernment opportunities. This will be supplemented by a campus visit from the author. In addition, staff and faculty members will examine the university's shared vocabulary for vocation as the work to develop a vocation-centered credential.

**Grove City College** (PA) will explore the dynamic relationship between the callings of faculty members and the callings of students. This initiative will provide a selection of professional development opportunities, including: (1) hosting a retreat that will provide an opportunity for all faculty members to read, discuss, and reflect on their vocation in a Christian liberal arts college; (2) convening a steering committee and fellows program to identify best practices for increasing the capacity of faculty members to thrive at different career stages; and (3) delivering a series of workshops to help faculty members develop the skills, resources, and capacities they need to mentor and equip students to pursue their God-given callings.

**Holy Cross College** (IN) will engage with staff and faculty members across the college on the pressing issue of vocational development in liberal arts education. The college will begin a process of conversations, training, and development on the nature of vocation, its relationship to educational pursuits, and the way in which vocation informs career choices. In addition to opportunities for shared reading, group discussion, and workshops with invited speakers, this

project will include an overnight retreat for staff and faculty members, focusing on vocational exploration.

**Illinois Wesleyan University** will host a summer retreat with a core group of students, staff, and faculty members to revisit the question of institutional vocation. At two advising workshops, advisors will become familiar with new tools that promote effective dialogue about living well and doing good. The academic year will end with a featured campus speaker and a second gathering of the original summer retreat cohort to evaluate new vocational programming and to examine its impact on students. We will also pilot a small Designing Your Life reading group for staff, faculty members, and first-generation students.

**La Salle University** (PA) will create reading groups and host a retreat to assemble a guiding document for what vocation means at the university, particularly in the context of its founding Lasallian charism. La Salle will use the finalized document for onboarding new staff and faculty members and for evaluating ongoing vocation-related programming. Additionally, this project aspires to assist current staff and faculty members better understand the story of the vocations of their own lives, so that they might better support students as they undertake their own vocational exploration and seek to comprehend their own stories.

**Lee University** (TN) will conduct a seminar and retreat, inviting staff and faculty members to begin a new conversation on the vocation of a Christian university, particularly with regard to the liberal arts curriculum and the unique history of the institution. Participants will convene for bi-weekly discussions of relevant academic literature and to examine how the institution's understanding of vocation has changed over time. A summary statement on the seminar's work will be developed during a retreat near the end of the grant period.

**Lewis University** (IL) will conduct a reading group to develop a framework for student coaching and mentoring, based on the approach in Patrick Reyes's book *The Purpose Gap*, with the intention of making it a part of the university's advising model. This common framework, infused with learnings from *The Purpose Gap*, will aspire to increase equity in the level and depth of reflection within vocational exploration. The project will discuss barriers to success and will support resources to help students thrive, both during and beyond their college journey.

**Luther College** (IA) seeks to develop professional relationships that will increase the institution's capacity to support students in their discernment and development of a meaningful, on-campus experiential learning opportunity. In particular, this project will build capacity for students to complete experiential learning through forming staff and faculty member learning communities, designed to develop new opportunities for specific experiential learning projects. The college will also develop and implement workshops for academic advisors to increase students' ability to navigate and engage with the experiential learning program.

**Merrimack College** (MA) will develop its capacity for vocational discernment across the college by building a community of faculty members who will incorporate vocational

discernment into their particular areas of study. Throughout a year of study, discussion of resources, shared mentoring, and a vocation-focused retreat, faculty members will expand the language and practice of vocational discernment. It will include diverse perspectives designed to embed reflection and vocational formation within multiple communities of belonging.

**Monmouth College** (IL) will host a series of three sequential 6-week programs for staff and faculty members that will provide opportunities for extended conversations about vocational exploration, centered on questions of meaning and purpose, career preparation, and curriculum development. This project aspires to foster wider conversation within the institutional community about the value of vocational exploration, as well as developing common language which resonates with the other needs of the institution.

**Montreat College** (NC) will conduct a program for faculty members, staff, and students to integrate vocational thought and conversation into academic advising. The program will equip academic advisors for advisee interactions beyond a focus on the curriculum and toward vocational exploration and discernment. To broaden the scope of vocational understanding, this project will include two special convocation speakers who will address the integration of faith, academics, and vocation. Through these initiatives, faculty members and campus partners will be equipped to integrate vocational conversation throughout the life of the college.

**Mount Saint Mary's University** (CA) will create a reading and reflection series for staff and faculty members, which will provide them with dedicated space and time to examine their own vocations, as well as learning from one another about how they might strengthen their work with students in exploring and understanding their vocations. Attendees will draw on resources from the rich history of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, the Catholic intellectual tradition, and NetVUE's Scholarly Resources Project.

**Mount St. Mary's University** (MD) will engage administrators, staff, and faculty members to develop connections among conversations about virtue ethics, leadership formation, and vocational exploration. This project will convene faculty members to design reflection assignments in internships, which integrate vocational discernment and virtue ethics. These assignments will be embedded in a pilot program of non-credit-based internships during the grant period. The program will also include a professional development workshop for mentors who will work with student leaders.

**North Central College** (IL) will engage a group of faculty members in a community of practice around vocational exploration with the goal of creating a more solid foundation for student learning in general, and for experiential learning in particular. Through a series of retreats and reading group conversations, faculty members from across the college will examine what it would mean to encourage students to embrace doubt and uncertainty in their discernment paths. This project will also explore the intentional integration of vocational language into a recently launched career readiness curriculum.

**Ouachita Baptist University** (AR) will invite a team of staff and faculty members to attend a series of semi-monthly gatherings to explore the meeting points between the institutional mission of a Christian liberal arts institution and avenues for better addressing student need. In addition to exploring resources within the current discourse around vocation and calling, project participants will invite the perspectives of students, parents, and graduates of the institution, in order to uncover how the university might further cultivate student flourishing through vocational exploration.

**Our Lady of the Lake University** (TX) will engage staff and faculty members in sacred conversations on call and vocation, helping them consider how they might best guide students on their vocational journeys. The eight-month program will aid participants in exploring their own vocations in the context of their careers at the university, particularly with regard to the charism of the university's founders, servant leadership, and the pedagogy of vocational reflection. This development in the habits and skills of vocational reflection will be used to strengthen their capacities to accompany students on their journeys of discernment.

**Saint Anselm College** (NH) will launch an engaged learning experience that integrates students' academic learning with their individual development to help prepare every student for vocation, life, and career. With an emphasis on equity, one group of staff and faculty members will work to pilot two courses exploring the links among curriculum, experience, and vocation. A second group will test advising models in order to develop a framework for academic advising that can better support students in their experience of this intersection.

**Southwestern College** (KS) will conduct a project to build greater capacity for mentoring students as they discern vocational paths of service to their communities and to the world. A core group of staff and faculty members will engage with leading ideas in vocational discernment through discussion groups. This core team will develop a training model for the entire campus community and explore how to integrate vocational discernment more fully into academic curricula during the year following the grant period.

**St. Edward's University** (TX) will engage, train, and support selected faculty members in the teaching of vocational exploration through an inclusive lens. Faculty members will begin with a series of scholarly vocation resources and then participate in an intensive training and in a lunch-and-learn series with the institution's office of faculty diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, as well as the Holy Cross Institute. Participating faculty members will create curricular units to infuse into their major and general education courses.

**St. Thomas University** (FL) will invite staff and faculty members to participate in a spiritual enrichment retreat to reflect on their own vocations as Catholic educators. Then, throughout the academic year, this project will offer a series of workshops to engage the language of vocational reflection, and to explore student vocational discernment opportunities, with equitable access and inclusion for the university's diverse student body. These workshops will produce a roadmap of

tools and resources for programming and curriculum enhancement which will cover all four years of the undergraduate experience.

**Taylor University (IN)** will provide the opportunity for faculty members to study together, consider model programs, and engage with external speakers, in order to propose a set of key vocational inquiries. This set of vocational questions will be utilized toward an arc of development over the course of a student's academic career at Taylor. The project aspires to present every student with the opportunity to consider how the pursuit of their personal vocation is tied to their understanding of God and godly wisdom.

**The College of St. Scholastica (MN)** will embed the teaching of vocational discernment in three key general education courses to reach all traditional first-year students. This project will convene a summer workshop for all faculty members who teach sections of these courses to facilitate their understanding of vocation, discuss vocation readings, and work together to develop curricular revisions in a workshop format. This project is designed to form the foundation for future curricular innovation around calling and discernment.

**Tufts University (MA)** will create a learning community of staff members which meets monthly (including two half-day retreats) to explore multidisciplinary and multifaith perspectives on vocation, reflecting on selected readings and multimedia resources. This learning community will develop a working definition of vocation for Tufts, which will provide a foundation for new programming after the grant period. This project will culminate in an all-campus event showcasing the many ways the Tufts community interacts with this working definition of vocation through dance, demonstration, music, stories, art, poetry, and spoken word.

**University of Dayton (OH)** will create, pilot, and assess a holistic and integrative method of academic advising, reflecting the university's commitment to educate students in the Catholic Marianist tradition and furthering its learning goals of vocation, faith formation, and diversity. This integrative advising model will foster vocational discernment and faith development, incorporate the practice of appreciative advising, and employ inclusive and culturally responsive instructional techniques. This grant project will include the development of a toolkit and a professional learning workshop for future advisors to put this advising model into practice; it will culminate in a white paper shared with the campus and the NetVUE community.

**University of Mount Union (OH)** will create intentional space for the exploration of vocation in this particular (post-pandemic) moment. Participating staff and faculty members will gather for deep discussion of both an individual and a collective sense of vocation and purpose. While the full group will meet occasionally, most of the vocational exploration will occur in smaller professional affinity groups among participants, including senior faculty member groups, mid-career faculty member groups, junior faculty member groups, and a range of appropriate staff groupings.

**Walla Walla University** (WA) will establish and convene a workgroup with university scholars, career services personnel, community business partners, and local school district representatives to develop tools that focus on creating vocational career pathways for vulnerable, underserved, and diverse first-year and prospective student populations. The project will partner with local high school professionals, migrant farm worker families, and community partner agencies, with the goal of further understanding the development of vocation and how the university might better support these students on their path toward meaningful life work.

**Wartburg College** (IA) will create a working group to increase the institution's understanding of student experiences of vocational exploration programming—particularly in the context of first-year student advising, experiential learning opportunities, study away experiences, and the mentor network of graduates of the college. The goal of the working group will be to refine that programming to achieve greater impact and durability in the lives of students. Participating staff and faculty members will identify opportunities to re-envision and bring cohesion to student vocational exploration, especially for first-generation and historically underrepresented students.