



## Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE)

### Grants for Fostering Leadership for Communities of Faith

Awarded in March 2025 • Funding for 2025–2027

**Anderson University (IN)** will expand and enrich its current faith-related internship program by increasing institutional capacity, establishing robust evaluation frameworks, and offering stipends to support financially disadvantaged students. Students will engage in hands-on, vocationally formative experiences at both a dynamic local church plant and a legacy congregation with more than a century of history. Through internships, intentional mentorship, and structured reflection, students will cultivate leadership skills, participate in community transformation, and deepen their discernment of calling.

**Antillean Adventist University (PR)** will launch a hybrid-format lay pastoral ministry certification program to empower lay church elders across Puerto Rico to explore full-time ministry. Participants will receive one-on-one mentoring, engage in regional collaboration, and develop key ministry skills to support and strengthen local congregations. The program also serves as a pathway to a bachelor's degree in theology. Designed to include under-resourced communities, this initiative fosters diverse leadership and supports the growing pastoral needs of Puerto Rico's faith communities.

**Bethel University (MN)** will coordinate across academic departments to pilot a new vocational exploration initiative with six local faith communities. Using a shared internship model, students will engage in subsidized placements with churches and mission-focused, faith-based nonprofits, gaining exposure to diverse ministry settings. Each student will receive on-site mentoring and participate in vocation and leadership formation guided by Bethel University faculty members. The initiative aims to create a more integrated, structured, and well-supported pathway for vocational discernment and leadership development.

**Bushnell University (OR)** will launch a new program focused on formation for ministry with two key components: paid internships for current students and mentoring support for recent graduates in ministry. Interns will be placed in vetted ministry sites, combining classroom learning with hands-on

experience, spiritual formation as a cohort, and weekly mentoring. The program includes cohort gatherings and reflective practices to support vocational discernment. Internship placement and support will prioritize economically disadvantaged students.

**Canadian Mennonite University (MB)** will host a biannual two-day ministry retreat at an off-campus location, bringing together students, faith leaders, and theological educators from across the Canadian prairie. Through dialogue, mentorship, and reflection, participants will explore questions of vocation, leadership, and spiritual formation. Framed by pre- and post-retreat engagement, the experience invites students to interpret their lived experiences theologically and to deepen vocational discernment within concrete ministry settings, fostering leadership in an increasingly diverse and multicultural context.

**Carleton College (MN)** will launch a new Religious Leadership Fellows program to support undergraduate students exploring paths in religious and spiritual leadership. Starting with a small cohort of juniors and seniors, the program will provide structured guidance for those considering careers in ordained ministry, chaplaincy (in healthcare, higher education, or the military), or service through faith-based nonprofits and community organizations. Through mentorship and vocational exploration, the program will help students discern and prepare for meaningful leadership in diverse spiritual contexts.

**Catawba College (NC)** will launch an internship program that connects students' vocational exploration with the lived theology of local faith communities, using an asset-based model of social transformation. Partnering with diverse congregations, students will engage in hands-on ministry while participating in bi-weekly theological reflection with religion department faculty members. Additionally, workshops led by faculty members in counseling, sociology, and environmental studies programs will deepen students' understanding of pastoral leadership through a holistic lens that integrates mental, spiritual, communal, and ecological well-being.

**Concordia College (MN)** and Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead, Minnesota will partner for an internship program to cultivate future church leaders through hands-on experience in music ministry, youth ministry, and church administration. Up to five paid internships per semester will provide practical training and vocational discernment, supported by mentorship from experienced church leaders. Prioritizing accessibility for students from lower-income and rural backgrounds, the program will deepen spiritual formation, strengthen leadership skills, and foster lasting connections between Concordia College and local faith communities.

**Friends University (KS)** will collaborate with local churches, parachurch ministries, and nonprofit organizations to offer paid, year-long internships for students exploring a vocation in ministry. These internships will provide meaningful opportunities for vocational discernment while engaging students with a variety of marginalized and underserved communities. Each intern will be paired with a personal mentor whose ministry leadership aligns with the student's vocational interests, allowing them to gain firsthand experience with the complex, multifaceted realities of ministry in today's world.

**Georgetown College (KY)** will strengthen ministerial formation by offering both short- and long-term engagement with local faith communities. Supported by student and mentor stipends, the intentionality and quality of mentorship formation will deepen. A new course focused on faith communities, and activities such as exposure trips, shared meals, and teaching sessions will encourage relationship-building and ministry-related vocational reflection. Engaging with diverse communities—across racial, denominational, and interfaith lines—will expand students’ vocational imagination and cultivate a posture of curiosity, listening, and mutual learning.

**LaGrange College (GA)** will launch an internship program placing five students per semester in local churches, where they will be mentored by local clergy and by the campus chaplain. Through hands-on experience across various ministry areas, regular reflection sessions, and professional development, students will engage in discernment of their calling in community. A semester retreat will unite students and church leaders to explore themes of vocation, social justice, diversity, and belonging—preparing students for broad-based, socially engaged leadership in communities of faith.

**Lee University (TN)** will launch a campus-wide initiative to expand vocational exploration and leadership development through partnerships with local churches. Open to students of all majors, the program includes a new faith-based leadership seminar and a renewed service-centered practicum offering hands-on ministry experience. Attending to difference and emphasizing justice and reconciliation, the initiative fosters spiritual growth while equipping students to navigate multicultural ministry. The program bridges classroom learning with practical service, supporting underserved churches, and preparing students for meaningful, faith-driven leadership.

**Luther College (IA)** will launch a year-long program designed for a cohort of students exploring faith-based or faith-informed vocations. Through guided discussions, intentional discernment, and hands-on learning, participants will engage a core set of broadly defined ministry skills applicable across a variety of settings. By focusing on transferable skills rather than specific ministry contexts, the program aims to prepare students for adaptable, responsive, and agile leadership in an evolving church and world.

**Maryville College’s (TN)** will design and implement a program in partnership with local faith communities, offering mentorship formation from campus ministers and faith leaders. Each year, five students representing diverse denominational backgrounds will be selected as a cohort. The program aims to provide rigorous mentorship and experiential learning, enabling participants to explore faith community leadership (in both ordained and lay capacities), engage in theological reflection, examine the church’s role in a changing world, and investigate the relationship between worship and service.

**McKendree University (IL)** will create an internship program, establishing within it a culture that enables students to pursue servant leadership within faith communities. Interns will commit 30 hours per semester to a partnered faith community, which will provide a mentor and a ministry project. Mentors will submit end-of-semester evaluations detailing achievements, challenges, and growth potential.

Additionally, participants will contribute 30 hours per semester with the campus chaplain to develop ministry engagement initiatives. They will also attend weekly formation sessions with the chaplain and guest presenters.

**McMurry University (TX)** will launch a summer internship initiative pairing students with seasoned pastoral mentors in partner congregations. Participants will gain practical experience in worship leadership, pastoral care, community outreach, and church administration. The cohort-based program includes a series of retreats on centering prayer, ministry-related case-study analysis, and guided reflections on ministry and leadership. This collaborative model promotes peer support, enriches understanding of ecclesial leadership, and cultivates vocational discernment—equipping emerging leaders with the skills and frameworks necessary to guide faith communities.

**Millsaps College (MS)** will enhance its current vocational exploration programs by establishing a semester-long paid internship program for students interested in ministerial and faith-related professions. Designed to re-engage the campus in meaningful conversations about faith and work, the program offers students resources to explore vocational identity through a faith-centered lens. Interns will serve in local faith communities, gaining hands-on experience, structured mentorship, and opportunities to deepen their understanding of vocation while developing leadership skills.

**Randolph-Macon College (VA)** will expand its ministry discernment program by offering paid, short-term internships with a variety of local congregations. Over a six-week period, students will serve in multiple settings, guided by trained mentors and a structured rubric of reflection questions and assignments. These placements provide hands-on experience, broaden students' understanding of varied faith communities, and deepen vocational discernment. Interns will also contribute their gifts to support and enrich the ministries of the congregations where they serve.

**Saint Mary's University of Minnesota (MN)** and the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart will launch a vocational discernment partnership to support undergraduate formation for leadership roles in Catholic parish life. Central to the initiative is collaboration between student peer ministers and parish leaders through shared learning, reflective dialogue, and service. The program includes two annual workshops, intentional mentorship between students and parish leaders, and paid summer internships.

**Seattle University (WA)**, grounded in its Jesuit Catholic mission, will launch a ministerial leadership formation program placing a diverse cohort of undergraduates in year-long, paid internships with partnering Catholic high schools. Interns will lead youth-focused faith programming—such as retreats, service projects, and eco-spirituality experiences—while engaging in guided Ignatian reflection. Open to students of all backgrounds, the initiative fosters vocational discernment, leadership development, and deeper connections between the university and the faith communities of local Catholic high schools.

**Tabor College (KS)** will partner with the Central and Southern Districts of the US Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches to create a certificate program for emerging ministry leaders, including undergraduate students. Participants will join regional cohorts for hybrid coursework while serving in local congregations. Over two years, students will complete up to ten theology and ministry courses rooted in Mennonite Brethren identity, exploring how Anabaptist commitments to peace and reconciliation can shape effective leadership in today's polarized public context.

**Trinity Christian College (IL)** will expand and enhance programs that support students exploring future leadership roles in faith communities. The initiative aims to increase students' awareness of ministry opportunities and strengthen their leadership skills for service in the local church. Key components include a new curriculum on vocational discernment and church leadership, one-day retreats with faculty and church leaders, paid internships, and ongoing mentorship for all participating students to support their vocational journey.

**Trinity University (TX)** will launch a ten-week paid summer internship program for undergraduates to develop leadership skills through service with faith-based organizations advocating for under-resourced communities. Interns will partner with local churches and faith-based nonprofits in San Antonio, contributing to projects that promote compassion and justice. Guided by experienced mentors and university chaplains, students will engage in bi-weekly discussions on social issues, spiritual growth, and vocational discernment, culminating in a final project reflecting their learning and impact.