



Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) Grants to Individuals for Vocational Exploration

Awarded in 2026 • Funding for 2026–2027

Suzanne Ashworth (Otterbein University, OH) will design a three-course vocational discernment sequence centered on openness to the stranger. It will examine how the curriculum fosters growth in curiosity, service motivation, and virtuous hope, and how pedagogies help students articulate vocation as a response to needs in communal, professional, and ecological contexts. The project extends scholarship on vocation as a situated, ethical orientation toward difference and need. It will produce replicable teaching materials and practices, near-peer and cross-cohort mentoring models, and a reflective essay submission for the *Vocation Matters* blog.

Lydia Bechtel (Friends University, KS) will develop a vocational discernment course for undergraduate fine arts students that broadens perceptions of career pathways in art, music, and theatre. The course will feature reflective assignments, guest speakers, group discussions, and structured connections to industry professionals who can serve as mentors. Working with colleagues across fine arts, Bechtel will produce a full syllabus and curriculum and assemble a vetted mentor network with at least ten professionals. The project will create a transferable model that helps students align artistic study, vocation, and service.

Tara Brooke Watkins (Salve Regina University, RI) will write a vocationally focused guide to story circles that shows how shared storytelling fosters trust, belonging, and discernment of vocation. Grounded in the practice's history and its development in theatre and community activism, the guide will present principles, step-by-step facilitation guidance, strategies for inclusive participation, research-informed rationale for design choices, and case studies for classrooms, meetings, community engagement, qualitative research, and devised theatre. The project will produce a complete manuscript and a book proposal.

Jennifer Browdy (Simon's Rock at Bard College, NY) will author *Writing the Future: Creative Leadership for a Better World*, an undergraduate text that equips students and

instructors to use environmental humanities for purposeful leadership. The book will introduce contemporary writer-activists and guide readers through research, reflective praxis, and creative writing techniques to envision actionable “thrutopian” pathways from present challenges to a thriving future. The project will produce a conference presentation, a *Vocation Matters* blog post, two scholarly articles, and a book manuscript, providing transferable resources for courses across disciplines.

Nathan Carson (Fresno Pacific University, CA) will redesign an introductory environmental philosophy course around vocational questions oriented to social and ecological goods. Embedded in an immersive summer program with multi-day backpacking in an alpine wilderness, the course will integrate seminar learning with guided reflection and community practices that help students develop an “ecological self” and connect vocation to care for people and place. The project will produce a presentation to the Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education and a published blog that distills a framework for using immersive experiential programs to foster eco-relevant vocational growth.

Kelly Chaney (Morningside University, IA) will integrate vocation-centered experiential learning into teacher preparation through a new strand of courses and a formal partnership with a regional nonprofit serving individuals with disabilities. Students will complete 20–25 hours of adaptive recreation and community-engaged service (with an option for a semester internship), supported by weekly seminars, guided reflection, and mentorship that frames vocation as a commitment to human dignity, responsibility, and service. The project will produce revised syllabi and reflection frameworks, pedagogical models, assessment tools, and a white paper on vocation-centered experiential learning, providing a replicable model for other institutions.

Stephenie Chaudoir (College of the Holy Cross, MA) will examine how private liberal arts colleges and universities are redefining student success in an era shaped by generative AI. Through interviews with cross-campus leaders at ten institutions, the study will document how higher education institutions integrate employability and inquiry into vocation across curricula and co-curricula. Findings will be distilled into concise comparative case studies and a facilitated community of practice where participants test interpretations, share strategies, and surface transferable approaches. The project will produce case studies, a convening-based community of practice, scholarly publications, and practical guidance for mission-driven colleges and universities.

Justin Compton (Stonehill College, MA) will develop a vocational integration model for international environmental field research, bringing vocational formation to parity with scientific training. Based on analysis of student reflections from fieldwork in Costa Rica, the project will map how immersive research catalyzes vocational discernment and will translate those insights into materials for field-based courses in different educational contexts. The project will produce

a faculty toolkit, a student field workbook, assessment rubrics, a peer-reviewed article, conference presentations, a digital resource repository, and a case study, providing resources for faculty members at other institutions.

Danielle Corple (Wheaton College, IL) will examine how social media's influence on gender and family shapes women's vocational discernment, focusing on the "tradwife" trend. Using interviews and focus groups, she will analyze how these messages influence aspirations around career and family and develop classroom applications. The project will produce a conference presentation, an article submitted to *Studies in Vocation and Calling*, a "Callings of Career & Family" course syllabus, and a NetVUE blog submission with teaching activities and resource links, advancing understanding of social media's role in vocation.

Michelle Falter (St. Norbert College, WI) will explore how young adult literature can support vocational discernment in undergraduate education by convening a five-day collaborative retreat, working collaboratively with two other scholars of young adult literature: **Gretchen Rumohr (Aquinas College, MI)** and **Terri Suico (Saint Mary's College, IN)**. Using a five-text immersion approach that combines seminar discussion, structured reflection, and collaborative curriculum design, the team will translate literary inquiry into classroom practice. The project will produce student-facing curricular modules, a NetVUE teaching resource guide, and a co-authored scholarly article.

Jamie Fazio (Nazareth University, NY) will examine how generative AI influences first-year undergraduates' vocational discernment and self-understanding. Through baseline and follow-up assessments, a technology-free retreat, and post-retreat discussions, the project will identify how students use AI in decision-making and explore practices that build reflective habits and authentic relationships. Drawing on the wisdom of Thomas Merton and Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi, this project will produce a pastoral guide for university chaplaincies, an analysis report summarizing findings and recommendations, and workshop materials for chaplains and student development professionals.

Álvaro González Alba (Regis University, CO) will examine how immersive study in Ecuador's Cuyabeno region shapes undergraduates' understanding of vocation, responsibility, and the common good. Through faculty-led intercultural engagement with Indigenous communities, students will participate in guided conversations and reflective writing before, during, and after travel and connect personal aspirations with community-oriented, collective well-being. Using qualitative analysis of journals, essays, discussions, and interviews across two trips, the project will document evolving ideas about vocation and community engagement, producing a research paper, pedagogical materials for university courses, and a final report synthesizing findings for future use.

Precious Hall (St. Lawrence University, NY) will develop and offer a new course, “Politics as a Vocation,” that embeds vocational reflection in political science. Using Max Weber’s 1919 lecture *Politik als Beruf*, this course will challenge students studying political science to grapple with and cultivate their ethic of responsibility and the necessary balance among passion, responsibility, and proportion. Students will examine the ethics of political leadership, engage in analysis of several political leaders, and practice structured reflection to identify values, responsibilities, and purpose. The project will produce a formal course syllabus for wider use, an article submitted to *Studies in Vocation and Calling*, a *Vocation Matters* blog submission, and a presentation at the American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference.

Benjamin Jasnow (William Jewell College, MO) will develop a two-course honors sequence that integrates vocational reflection with character education and community-engaged learning. In the first course, students will study philosophical, psychological, and theological frameworks and design a community-directed project aligned with their vocational interests. In the second, they will implement those projects with community partners while practicing structured reflection and assessment. The project will produce a new honors curriculum and a submitted scholarly article on vocation, character, and civic engagement, providing adaptable approaches for undergraduate educators.

Lori Lohman (Augsburg University, MN) will revise a senior-level business course to integrate business ethics with vocational discernment, helping students examine personal values, professional identity, and career decisions through ethical frameworks and real-world dilemmas. The redesign will add structured reflection, a vocational portfolio, and updated learning activities that link ethical reasoning with calling and purpose as students prepare for life after college. The project will produce a revised syllabus with implementable activities, a NetVUE blog post translating lessons for faculty adoption, and a conference presentation.

Rebecca Loret de Mola (Aquinas College, MI) will integrate Narrative Medicine into undergraduate courses in anatomy and physiology to foster vocational discernment among pre-health students. By engaging patient narratives, reflective writing, and guided discussions linked to core physiological topics, students will examine how learning the body informs calling, responsibility, and care while developing professional identity. The project will evaluate changes in vocational language using validated instruments and thematic analyses. It will produce reusable instructional modules, a conference presentation, and a submitted journal article.

Laurel Potter (University of St. Thomas, MN) will redesign a Spanish-language section of an introductory theology course by partnering with *Bendita Mezcla*—a grassroots formation program in Latin America and the Caribbean. Students will engage in a study of liberation theology and the narrative and artistic traditions of the Americas to explore vocation. The project will document and translate these practices for US classrooms and produce conference presentations

at the Annual Colloquium of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States and a submitted article for publication.

Ellen Prusinski (Centre College, KY) will examine how community-engaged learning influences undergraduate vocational discernment by comparing two versions of the same course—one with community-engaged learning and one without. Using pre- and post-course surveys and structured reflections, the study will assess changes in students' attitudes, intentions, and beliefs about vocation and their capacity for intentional vocational reflection. Findings will inform course design and faculty practice. The project will produce a campus workshop that shares instruments and prompts, as well as an article submitted to *Studies in Vocation and Calling*.

Molly Lockart (Samford University, AL) will design and pilot a curriculum that integrates vocational reflection into mentored undergraduate research in STEM. Students will use weekly assignments, reflection prompts, and guided mentoring alongside hands-on inquiry to consider purpose, calling, and career paths. A summer research cohort will test and refine the materials. The project will produce a pilot curriculum with reusable course materials and mentoring guides, a *Vocation Matters* blog submission, and a multi-year assessment dataset to support future scholarship and offer a transferable model for embedding meaning and purpose more fully into undergraduate STEM education.

Michelle Steffenhagen (Bethel University, MN) will develop and test a coach training resource that equips educators to guide students' vocational exploration through structured conversations grounded in open questions and deep listening. After designing a prototype aligned with NetVUE's developmental understanding of vocation, she will train small cohorts, gather participant and student feedback, and evaluate usefulness for applications across roles such as academic advisors and student-facing staff. The project will produce a coach training resource, three pilot trainings, an assessment report on effectiveness, and recommendations to NetVUE regarding next steps for a potential network-wide tool.

Kevin Tate (John Carroll University, OH) will investigate how students' evolving sense of calling intersects with career self-efficacy, critical consciousness, and belonging as the university implements a vocation-centered advising model. Using standardized surveys and student focus groups, the mixed-methods study will analyze how systemic barriers shape vocational discernment, with attention to students from underrepresented backgrounds. The project will produce a peer-reviewed manuscript, shareable pedagogical resources, a conference presentation, and a *Vocation Matters* blog submission, providing the NetVUE community with evidence to design advising and mentoring practices that are vocationally rich and structurally equitable.

Matthew Vos (Covenant College, GA) will design and teach a course linking global sport, society, and vocation, helping sport management students understand sport beyond career preparation. While sports embody values such as teamwork and perseverance, they often undermine faith ideals through consumerism, violence, and dominance. Students in “Global Sport, Society, and Vocation” will volunteer at eight FIFA World Cup matches in Atlanta (June 2026), engaging in pre-departure learning, on-site reflection, and post-event debriefs to explore values, purpose, and the common good. Deliverables include *Vocation Matters* blog post submissions, a conference presentation, an article for *Studies in Vocation and Calling*, and a shareable syllabus.