The Council of Independent Colleges

NetVUE Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education

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Religion/Theology/Vocation

A Discipline-Specific Seminar for NetVUE Faculty Members · August 2–6, 2027

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is pleased to offer a discipline-specific seminar for full-time faculty members in the field of theology and/or religious studies at colleges and universities that are members of CIC's Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE). Participants will examine the interrelationship of the study of vocation and calling with the academic fields of theology and religious studies, exploring implications for research, teaching, and service to the institution.



Dates and Deadlines

Application deadline
January 22, 2027

Selection of participants
February 2027

Seminar gathering
August 2–6, 2027

Seminar location
Marquette Hotel
Minneapolis, MN

Over the past twenty years, the concepts of *vocation* and *calling* have become increasingly important across higher education in the United States. In college classrooms, faculty members are encouraging students to think of themselves as "called" or "summoned" to use their capabilities to influence the world by doing good. In the wider academy, scholars are probing the significance of vocational exploration and discernment as a region of study, both within their own academic fields and in interdisciplinary settings. A new scholarly impulse has focused on questions as to what might constitute a truly good, meaningful, and flourishing life, and how those who live such lives might improve the well-being of others. The seminar participants will bring their experiences with vocation on their own campuses, whether in teaching, research, writing, service, or inter-office cooperation, but with a focus on the academic disciplines of theology and religious studies.

About the Seminar

Seminar discussions will cover a range of activities that can enhance vocational exploration in undergraduate education. Some attention will be given to direct work with students, whether through classroom teaching, advising co-curricular activities, or mentoring; however, the primary focus of this seminar will extend beyond classroom applications to include research, writing, and institutional leadership on the topic of vocation. Because all members of the seminar will be faculty members in the fields of theology and religious studies, the primary point of focus will be that discipline's understanding of vocation and calling, and its consideration of both theoretical and practical elements of that work.

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Seminar Leaders



Nicole (Niki) Johnson is professor of religious studies and chair of the department of interdisciplinary humanities at the University of Mount Union, where she also serves as director of the Peacebuilding & Social Justice program. Her main teaching and research interests include religious conflict and peacebuilding, interfaith cooperation for peace, faith-based social justice, and what it means to be educated in the liberal arts tradition. She is the co-author of *Faithful Witness in a Fractured World: Models for an Authentic Christian Life* (2019) and editor and chapter contributor for *Humanities Perspectives in Peace Education: Re-Engaging the Heart of Peace Studies* (2021). Her article, "Liberation From and For: The Vocation of the Educated Person," served as the lead article in a special issue of *Christian Scholars Review*, edited by NetVUE Executive Director David Cunningham (July 2023). She earned her BA in religious studies and political science from Westminster College (PA), an MA in applied theology from Wheeling Jesuit University, and a ThD in practical theology and church history from Boston University School of Theology.



Jason Mahn is a professor of religion and the Conrad Bergendoff Chair in the Humanities at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, as well as a professional development program officer for NetVUE. Trained as a constructive theologian, Jason writes about existentialist themes (especially those in Søren Kierkegaard), theological anthropology, eco-theology, secularity and religious faith, and—his current focus—grace and giftedness in our neoliberal and meritocratic culture. He has written or edited six books, including most recently Neighbor Love through Fearful Days: Finding Purpose and Meaning in a Time of Crisis (2021), which lifts up the vocations of former students, and So That All May Flourish: The Aims of Lutheran Education (2023), which grapples with institutional callings among ELCA colleges and universities. Jason writes regularly for Vocation Matters, the NetVUE blog; he also contributed "The Conflicts in Our Callings: The Anguish (and Joy) of Willing Multiple Things" to the second book in the NetVUE Scholarly Resources Project, Vocation Across the Academy: A New Vocabulary for Higher Education. He holds a BA from Gustavus Adolphus College, an MA from Luther Theological Seminary, and a PhD from Emory University.

Application Details

Any full-time member of the faculty who holds a terminal degree in theology and/or religious studies (or a closely-related field) at a NetVUE member institution is eligible to apply. Through the generosity of Lilly Endowment Inc., all seminar costs will be covered, including a generous travel reimbursement. Applicants will be asked for basic contact information, and then will need to upload to the online application portal a single document that includes the following three items:

1. A statement of interest (no more than two pages);
2. An abbreviated curriculum vitae (no more than five pages);
3. One letter of recommendation from a colleague in the field.

For complete seminar information and application details, visit **cic.edu/religion**

Contact

For questions about the seminar or the nomination process, contact Rachael Baker, NetVUE associate director, at (616) 632-1060 or rbaker@cic.edu.

This event is made possible through the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE), a program of the Council of Independent Colleges. NetVUE is funded through member dues and generous support from Lilly Endowment Inc.