



# Grants for Fostering Leadership for Communities of Faith

## Invitation for Applications

**Deadline: Friday, December 15, 2023**

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The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) invites colleges and universities that are members of the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) to apply for grant support to develop or strengthen programs designed to support students who are exploring future leadership roles in communities of faith.

## The Opportunity

NetVUE member colleges and universities recognize that intentional programming and thoughtful mentoring can prove significant in a higher education setting for the exploration of and discernment of a student's many callings in life. This grant program seeks proposals to augment current institutional approaches to undergraduate vocational development, particularly those that help students connect with communities of faith as they consider possible callings to leadership of those communities. In order to support NetVUE member campuses in their work, Lilly Endowment Inc. has provided funding to CIC to be used for NetVUE Grants for Fostering Leadership for Communities of Faith.

**The Council of Independent Colleges is grateful to Lilly Endowment Inc. for its generous support of this program.**

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NetVUE Grants for Fostering Leadership for Communities of Faith may be requested in amounts ranging from \$25,000 to \$40,000 for use over two years to develop new programs, or to strengthen existing programs, that support students as they consider vocations of leadership for communities of faith. Programming should seek to develop students' capacity for such leadership, in part through facilitating formative connections between participating students and particular faith communities.

A wide range of proposals for student leadership formation are welcome, but each should include a mechanism for involving students (individually or in groups) with an established faith community near campus. Particular preference will be given to proposals which include efforts connected to justice, diversity, equity, or reconciliation. Proposals may, for instance, include activities of service which promote economic justice, or make a particular effort to reach out to include and support students from historically marginalized backgrounds to better understand their calling, or make a concerted effort to include a diversity of leading voices from within a specific faith tradition.

Some expenses are ineligible for grant support; for details, please consult the Grant Budget Guidelines document on the NetVUE website.

Examples of initiatives that might be proposed include:

- A program that brings faculty members into partnership with local faith communities and their leaders (lay and ordained) to develop strategies for encouraging vocational exploration in advising, mentoring, and experiential learning opportunities;
- Paid student internships that help carry out the work of faith communities, with stipends to support mentoring conversations with advisors and local faith and service leaders;
- Curriculum design and implementation for programs in religious studies, leadership, and/or the arts—including experiential learning opportunities that include a robust and in-person connection to a local faith community;
- The design of evening courses for non-degree seeking students, aimed particularly at second-career or retiring adults discerning a call to leadership in faith communities;
- Support for students to engage in off-campus study of sacred texts, in partnership with a committed cohort from within a local community of faith, with supporting academic instruction for the study of those texts; or
- Support for the exploration of bi-vocational models of faith community leadership, inviting students to reflect on building capacity for lay leadership in the context of career preparation for other fields.

Grants will be awarded based on proposals that explain (a) the purpose and goals of the proposed activities and their relationship to the specifics of formation for leadership of communities of faith; (b) the relationship and harmony of these activities with ongoing institutional efforts, particularly those connected to vocational exploration; (c) the ways in which proposed activities or programs would facilitate regular and formative connections between students and specific communities of faith during the grant period; and (d) the ways in which NetVUE-supported

initiatives would be sustained by the institution beyond the grant period. Programs consisting primarily of direct financial support for undergraduate students (in the form of internships, scholarships, or stipends) will be considered only if the institution can demonstrate how it will sustain these programs well beyond the grant period.

## Eligibility and Funding Timeline

All NetVUE member colleges and universities are eligible to apply for funding. *Note: If an institution already holds one or more other NetVUE grants, the application must demonstrate that staffing and other resources are adequately distributed to allow all projects to succeed. Ordinarily this will require that the programs supported by the grants be directed by distinct leadership teams.*

This is the first round of NetVUE Grants for Fostering Leadership for Communities of Faith. Up to 20 awards will be made in this round. The deadline for proposals is December 15, 2023. Decisions will be announced by March 1, 2024. Funds will be disbursed in two equal payments: the first half by April 1, 2024, and the second half by April 1, 2025 (following approval of an interim report). Spending must be completed by March 30, 2026.

## Expectations of Grant Recipients

If awarded a NetVUE Grant for Fostering Leadership for Communities of Faith, the institution will agree to:

- Submit a written progress report to CIC by February 14, 2025—that is, toward the end of the first year of grant activities;
- Provide final narrative and financial reports to CIC by May 29, 2026, over the signature of the president or chief academic officer, which describe the outcomes of the project, indicate the degree to which project goals were met, reflect on the effectiveness of the initiatives, and chart directions for the future;
- Participate in efforts by CIC and NetVUE to assess grant-funded activities, including (but not limited to) participation in surveys, virtual focus groups, and virtual gatherings of grant directors;
- Permit inclusion of information about its project in CIC and NetVUE publications;
- Be willing to share, at future NetVUE Conferences and gatherings, and by means of a one-page summary to be posted on the NetVUE website, what the institution has learned through its grant-supported activities;
- Identify the funded activities as supported by the Council of Independent Colleges and Lilly Endowment Inc. in all project materials and publicity;
- Maintain membership in NetVUE throughout the grant period; and
- Send a campus team headed by the president, chief academic officer, or another officer at the vice-presidential level to the 2026 NetVUE Conference. (Three-person teams attend with only a nominal registration fee; costs for accommodation and meals are waived.)

## Application Guidelines

Proposals should be submitted online as a single document and consist of the following:

**A One- to Two-Paragraph Executive Summary of the Proposal** (400 words maximum)

**A Brief Public Description** of the project (five sentences maximum), which will be posted on the NetVUE website if the project is funded. Examples from other NetVUE grant programs may be found in the listings of previously-awarded NetVUE grants on the website.

**A Four- to Five-Page Narrative** that provides, in clearly marked sections, the following:

- A description of **current vocational exploration programs on campus** (including an estimate of the amount of ongoing annual expenditures for these programs), as well as an account of the institution's understanding of vocation in relation to its mission and how this understanding guides current and proposed programming;
- A description of both the challenges and the opportunities that the grant would address in the institution's program for vocational exploration among potential future leaders for communities of faith;
- A statement of project goals that can be referenced and assessed—both during and at the end of the grant period—to evaluate project success;
- A description of proposed activities during the grant period;
- A description of the institution's strategy for encouraging broad participation across socio-economic categories, for exploring the diversity of voices within the partnering faith communities, and for building institutional capacity to promote vocation-related work among disadvantaged, marginalized, or minoritized groups;
- A statement of the institution's willingness to share at future NetVUE Conferences and gatherings what the institution has learned through its grant-supported activities, including initial suggestions about the nature of presentations that might be offered;
- A description of how the institution will continue the enhanced vocation initiative after the grant period; and
- A plan for assessment and evaluation of the project, both during and at the end of the grant period, along with a description of indicators that would demonstrate that project goals have been met.

**A One-Page Project Timeline**

**A One-Page Roster** that lists the names and contact information (including phone number and email address) for (a) the principal project contact; (b) the senior (cabinet-level) administrator who will oversee the project; (c) at least one leader from a local community of faith who is willing to be engaged in the project and to provide a letter of support; and (d) the project's other leaders, whether from within the institution or outside it, who will help carry out the project, including short descriptions of their qualifications for the specified roles.

**A Letter of Support** from a leader of the partnering faith community describing the strengths and challenges faced by their community of faith, as well as their community's capacity to provide effective mentoring and support to students considering vocations of leadership.

**A Concise Budget** (formatted in Microsoft Excel) that describes the main expense categories for each project year, including all programmatic expenses and, as needed, faculty and staff stipends, honoraria for speakers, meals and travel for meetings, and costs of materials and supplies. The budget also should include a separate column indicating the institution's financial support of this project. Details about eligible expenses and the construction of the budget, as well as answers to frequently asked budget questions and a sample budget, are available in the Grant Budget Guidelines document on the NetVUE website.

**A Letter of Endorsement** from the president offering support for the project, indicating the institution's commitment to sustain grant-supported activities during and after the grant period, and designating a member of the president's cabinet to provide oversight for the project. The letter should affirm the institution's commitment to continue NetVUE membership throughout the grant period and to send a campus team headed by the president, chief academic officer, or another officer at the vice-presidential level to the 2026 NetVUE Conference.

## Application Deadline

The application deadline is **December 15, 2023**. Proposals should be submitted electronically with supporting materials as a single document, using the application portal in the NetVUE section of the CIC website. Only applications submitted electronically will be considered.

## Questions?

Questions about this and other NetVUE grant programs should be addressed to Carter Aikin, NetVUE grants director, at [caikin@cic.edu](mailto:caikin@cic.edu) or (217) 854-5619.