

Summary of Program Development Grant: Point Loma Nazarene University February 2016

Our proposal was to use a NetVUE Program Development Grant as a means to seek to strengthen the work being done by Point Loma Nazarene University to enhance the ways that the institution assists undergraduate students in the exploration of vocation. The specific goals for our project are:

- To enhance the vocational component of the First Year Experience class through faculty and staff small-group leader training;
- To develop targeted programming about vocation for sophomores within the existing structure of residential life activities, the Office of Strengths and Vocation activities, and co-curricular leader training; and
- To develop discipline-specific ways for students to discern their call within the context of their major program.

Outcomes

The outcomes by groups are listed below:

Freshmen: The original proposal was to use the grant to strengthen early exploration of vocation in the freshmen year through some enhanced training of faculty and staff who lead the First Year Experience small groups. In the fall of 2012, PLNU pilot tested a First Year Experience (FYE) class and continued it through fall of 2014. After the fall of 2014, the university made the decision to discontinue the class because it was not achieving institutional aims. We then sought permission from NetVUE to refocus our work with freshmen on the freshman composition class. Virtually all freshmen must take this course in their first two semesters and the writing faculty were willing to reimagine the class through the lens of vocation. The course was designed in the summer of 2015, run for the first time in the fall of 2015, and has been continued in the spring of 2016. The course is framed using vocation. The first writing prompt in the course is an essay on vocation. To prepare for the for the final exam, the students are given a mini reader of articles on vocation that includes scripture (The Parable of the Talents) and writing by a diverse set of authors including Wendell Barry and Madeline L'Engle. The students read and mark up the reader before the final exam and then use the reader as a reference for their final exam writing. This has been successful. After grading final exams in the fall of 2015, the faculty member who leads our writing program said *"we are quite pleased with the differences in depth of thought and complexity of writing we see in this semester's finals after having the students read and respond to the readings and also with 'framing' the semester with a focus on vocation."*

Sophomores: The grant was to help PLNU to focus sophomore level exploration of vocation through co-curricular programming. The two groups of people involved in this phase of the project were the Residential Life staff (the team that works with sophomores) and the Office of Strengths and Vocation (our version of a career center). The Office of Strengths and Vocation (OSV) did some research in best practices at other universities and have incorporated some of those ideas into their programming. The OSV has gone through a change in leadership and has a new leader who is extremely interested in vocation. I expect that this new leader will build significantly on the preliminary work done by the previous team.

The Residential Life staff did a great deal of research into best practices and visited some universities in our region to learn more about what they were doing with sophomore programming. Our Residential Life staff also held focus groups with current sophomores as well as upper division students. Based on this data they worked through several iterations of a

sophomore programming design and arrived at a program that is sustainable, builds on existing programming, and which preliminary results indicate is effective. These are:

- Providing a warm welcome for sophomores when they return to campus (most of our students are residential). The focus of this welcome is to help them think about their sophomore year as a time to begin to think seriously about call.
- Creating an environment in the residential halls for students to ask the right questions to spark conversations leading to growth and development. This was achieved by developing a set of short questions to be used in various aspects of dorm life including discussion groups. These are known as “box topics” and exist in boxes throughout the dorms. The questions are intended to get students to think deeply. Here are a few examples: “What do you do that makes you lose track of time?”, “What *did* you want to be when you grew up?” and “What *do* you want to be when you grow up?” These box topics have been well used and are generating a very positive response from staff and students.
- Training for Residential Assistants (student leaders living in the dorms) that is focused on traditional students’ development while in college. This has led to cohort-specific events in the dorms. This focus on developmentally appropriate planning is improving student programming and meeting them “where they are” in their developmental path. This change has not only impacted what is happening with sophomores but also juniors and seniors.

Juniors and Seniors: PLNU uses the last two years of a student’s academic experience in their majors to build on the vocational foundation laid in their first two years. The NetVUE grant provided small grants to academic departments that were interested in deepening their ability to help upper division students to discern and prepare for their call. Most, but not all, academic departments made use of this opportunity and the ways in which they did their work is a wonderful kaleidoscope of the perspectives and disciplines in our community. All who took the mini grants were encouraged to think about how vocation is discussed and discovered in ways that are meaningful in their discipline. Here is a sample of the projects:

- Art and Design. One of the faculty members learned about human centered design. This is an area of graphic design that seeks to use design to help communities discover their own solutions to problems. She is now incorporating this into coursework and it has resulted in helping students to see how graphic design can be used for the common good. They have already partnered with non-profits (Minegi Museum, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries) as well as within the university (Creation Care Week).
- Music. Many of our music students become teachers in low-income communities. Because of the expense of instruments, many low-income schools have limited programs. One of our music faculty used the grant to buy a collection of percussion instruments to teach students different forms of drumming and the use of percussion “bands” as a way to take music into the community and to make music with what you have (anything from Home Depot bucket to a cello).
- Chemistry. The faculty in this department spent a semester reading and discussing a number of books on vocation. As the result of this discussion a vocational component has been added to their senior seminar and they are exploring ways to help students consider a wide variety of professions in chemistry beyond medical school.
- Sociology and Social Work. This department worked with community partners to consider ways that student’s sociology and social work knowledge could help to improve the criminal justice system.

- History and Political Science. These two disciplines developed a collection of readings to be used in their senior seminar/capstone classes. Not surprisingly, this is a completely different set of readings than those identified by Chemistry.
- Physics and Engineering. This department added a vocational assignment to their freshman course and paired it with an assignment in their senior lab course. This has led to some good discussions among our physics and engineering students about the calling in their careers throughout their years of study.
- School of Theology. This department had students create videos based on interviews that they conducted with individuals working in a number of ministry areas. These videos are used as part of a lower division ministry class and then used again in upper division classes. In addition, a group of seniors who went on a trip to Nazarene Theological Seminary made a video about what seminary life is like and in it discussed how they could imagine themselves studying at this seminary.

Biology, Education, Psychology, Literature and Nursing also worked on curriculum development for their upper division students. So there were a total of 12 of the 16 eligible academic departments that made use of the mini grants. Having this many academic units considering vocation from a number of perspectives has led to many rich conversations over lunch and coffee all over the university.

Faculty and Staff: The faculty and staff development focused on two key items: reading groups and some workshops to consider their own call as well as their work with students. The faculty/staff reading groups read:

- *Helping College Students Find Purpose* by Robert Nash and Michelle Murray (Fall 2014, 65 participants)
- *Visions of Vocation* by Steve Garber (Fall 2015, 110 participants)

Steve Garber came to PLNU for two days of discussions and workshops. These have been good times of faculty/staff fellowship and have created space to discuss how we work with students to help them discern and prepare for their calling.

Lessons Learned

The most consistent lesson learned throughout the administration of this grant is that “less is more.” Many of the small teams working on this grant started with complex plans, but as they began to flesh out their plans, it became clear that the best way to work with students is to design simple, flexible approaches to discussing vocation.

Future Impacts

One of the most important things that has occurred in parallel with this grant is that PLNU has been going through a “rebranding” process. We hired a research firm to help us better understand and communicate our institutional identity. What became clear through their internal and external research is that working with students around issues of vocation is already part of PLNU’s fundamental DNA. These results were presented to university leaders in December of 2015. Specific strategies for how to communicate this part of our identity are currently being developed. This change in the university’s communication of its identity will undoubtedly reinforce and expand the good work launched by this NetVUE grant.

Sustaining Vocational Initiatives

All of the activities contained in this proposal are taking place within existing programs of the university. The focus of the grant has been on capacity building, and curriculum and program development and will require little additional funding to sustain. The university is committed to maintaining the institutional programs that are connected with this grant.

Budget Notes

As can be seen by the attached spreadsheet, we did not spend the full \$50,000. The three areas where money was not expended can be summarized in the following way:

- Student Development spent less money than was budgeted (\$800)
- One department (Kinesiology) did not make use of their funds for development of a Junior/Senior vocation component in their program (\$2000)
- Scheduling issues meant that we cancelled Steve Garber's second visit (\$4600).

A check for \$7,383.88 will be sent to CIC to return the unspent funds.

Accounting for PLNU NetVUE Program Development Grant

Item	Revised Budget Amount	Actual	Difference	Notes
<u>Freshman Component:</u>				
Integrate reflective writing on vocation into our freshman composition course.	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 3,582.14	\$ (1,082.14)	The additional expense was for printing the readers for one year's worth of readers for the final exams. This expense will be absorbed by the university in the future.
<u>Sophomore Component:</u>				
Office of Strenths and Vocation	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ -	Student Development spent less money than budgeted because they wanted to help supplement Steve Garber's visits since they used him in part of their programming.
Student Development	\$ 6,900.00	\$ 6,095.89	\$ 804.11	
<u>Junior/Senior Component:</u>				
Minigrants for academic departments	\$ 26,600.00		\$ 2,742.26	One department which had been in the budget did not begin their project.
Nursing		\$ 2,000.00		
Psychology		\$ 2,000.00		
Music		\$ 2,000.00		
Biology		\$ 1,027.75		
Chemistry		\$ 1,999.99		
Sociology and Social Work		\$ 2,019.54		
Literature		\$ 1,999.76		
History and Political Science		\$ 2,000.50		
Physics		\$ 2,000.00		
Art and Design		\$ 2,609.76		
School of Theology		\$ 1,990.64		
School of Education		\$ 2,209.80		
<u>Faculty/Staff Development:</u>				
Reading Group 1	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 1,861.17	\$ (161.17)	This visit was cancelled due to scheduling issues. This initiative didn't start due to lack of time in the schedule of the proposers (who were involved with the writing course). Money used to support freshman reader above.
Reading Group 2	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 2,138.84	\$ (38.84)	
Garber Visit 1	\$ 3,400.00	\$ 3,580.34	\$ (180.34)	
Garber Visit 2	\$ 4,600.00	\$ -	\$ 4,600.00	
Framing Campus Reader	\$ 700.00	\$ -	\$ 700.00	
	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 42,616.12	\$ 7,383.88	Balance to be returned