



Educating Character Initiative: Building Capacity & Community at U.S. Colleges and Universities

Through a generous grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University is excited to launch the Educating Character Initiative and invite U.S. colleges and universities to join a broad and diverse community of individuals and institutions to strengthen the understanding, integration, and education of character in undergraduate institutions.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Educating Character Initiative aims to equip a wide range of public and private institutions of higher education—including but not limited to major research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, military academies, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, religiously affiliated colleges, single-gender colleges, and tribal colleges—with the resources, funding, and support needed to integrate character education into their distinctive institutional contexts, curricula, and cultures. The broader aspiration is to foster a robust network that recognizes the value of educating character within higher education.

In addition to organizing workshops, conferences, and convenings and developing resources for faculty and staff, the Educating Character Initiative will award grants to both individuals and institutions. In 2024, funding for institutions will include up to **10 Institutional Impact Grants** of between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000 as well as **20 Capacity-Building Grants** of up to \$50,000. Successful grantees will be teams of faculty, staff, and administrators at U.S. colleges and universities with outstanding proposals for developing the moral, civic, and/or intellectual character and capacity of faculty, staff, and students. Funding for individuals is available through **Teacher-Scholar Grants** (up to \$15,000), which may be used to support research on character or character education in undergraduates or to develop resources that strengthen the capacity to educate character at the grantee's institution or in the larger network. **Professional Development Grants** (up to \$5,000) will help faculty and staff become educators of character or lead efforts to educate character at their institutions.

II. OVERVIEW AND INVITATION TO JOIN THE EDUCATING CHARACTER INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND

In his campus newspaper at Morehouse College, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that “intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”¹ In elevating character as central to “the purpose of education,” King identified an important but often neglected thread in the history of American higher education. From their beginnings, many U.S. colleges and universities have included the formation of character among their central educational aims.² While the emphasis on character diminished in the latter half of the twentieth century, many colleges and universities are now seeking to recover an emphasis on character while honoring the diversity and pluralism that characterize American life. This focus has become particularly urgent as the lack of good character in the public and private sectors has become more conspicuous and as persistent social and political divisions, the rise of new technology, and increasing costs have caused many to question higher education’s value. Many who might have been uninterested or skeptical of character now see its vital importance, both for forming students to use their knowledge, skills, and capacities to serve humanity and for highlighting the distinctive value of higher education in contemporary life. As a result, an increasing number of institutions are now elevating the importance of character.

This shift aligns with a sense among many faculty that shaping character is part of their role. In the most recent faculty survey administered by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, 85% of 20,000 faculty across 143 four-year institutions said they “agree” or “strongly agree” that it is important for faculty to “develop students’ moral character” and “help students develop personal values.”³ Across several fields, scholars are advancing more sophisticated and practically relevant accounts of character, and experts have illuminated why educating good character can be a valuable purpose for institutions of higher education. Intentional efforts to educate character can support student wellbeing and flourishing, sustain academic excellence and integrity, promote equitable and inclusive community, foster good leadership

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Purpose of Education,” in *Maroon Tiger* (January – February 1947), 10, reprinted in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Vol. 1: Called to Serve, January 1929 – June 1951*, ed. Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, and Penny A. Russell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 122–124, at 124.

² See, e.g., Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Douglas Sloan, “The Teaching of Ethics in the American Undergraduate Curriculum, 1876–1976,” in *Ethics Teaching in Higher Education*, ed. Daniel Callahan and Sissela Bok (New York: Plenum Press, 1980), 1–57; and Elizabeth Kiss and J. Peter Euben, eds., *Debating Moral Education: Rethinking the Role of the Modern University* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

³ E. B. Stolzenberg, M. K. Eagan, H. B. Zimmerman, J. Berdan Lozano, N. M. Cesar-Davis, M. C. Aragon, and C. Rios-Aguilar, *Undergraduate Teaching Faculty: The HERI Faculty Survey 2016-2017* (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA, 2019), 33.

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and citizenship, advance career preparation and vocational discernment, and encourage the responsible use of technology. In many cases, educating character can also support an institution's efforts to fulfill its distinctive educational mission, values, and aspirations.⁴

Yet, even if many colleges and universities desire to integrate character into their cultures and curricula, many do not know *how* to do so effectively. This work is especially complex given the diversity and pluralism of American society; the increasing demands placed on universities by students, parents, employers, and the general public; and the lack of a common vocabulary and institutional structure that can overcome silos of specialization that characterize many disciplines and institutions.⁵ These challenges, among others, make it difficult for many institutions to imagine, much less implement, meaningful efforts to educate character in their contexts. Faculty trained to do research in specialized disciplines often do not know how to educate character effectively in the classroom, and the pressure to publish research and fulfill increasing service demands makes it difficult to devote time and energy to learning a new field or designing new courses that address questions of character. Meanwhile, administrators trying to cut costs and satisfy a diverse range of stakeholders—from faculty, staff, and trustees to students, parents, and alumni—often lack the funding, time, and capacity to focus on educating character across their institutions.⁶ As a result, even colleges and universities who want to educate character often do not have the ability to do so at a time when it is both highly desired and desperately needed. The Educating Character Initiative seeks to address this urgent need.

INCREASING IMPACT BY BUILDING CAPACITY AND COMMUNITY

The mission of the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest is to inspire, educate, and empower leaders of character to serve humanity. Through innovative teaching, creative programming, and cutting-edge research, we aim to transform the lives of students, foster an inclusive culture of leadership and character, and catalyze a broader public conversation that places character at the center of leadership.

Since 2017, we have been advancing this mission primarily at Wake Forest, but in recent years many colleges and universities have reached out to solicit advice and share ideas about how to educate character in a university context. Inspired by our motto of *Pro Humanitate* (for humanity) and supported through a generous grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., we have developed the Educating Character Initiative to support a wider community of individuals and

⁴ These reasons were addressed in Michael Lamb, “Why Character?”, *Educating Character Across the University Conference*, Wake Forest University (December 2, 2022).

⁵ On institutional barriers to educating character in colleges and universities, see Michael Lamb, Edward Brooks, and Jonathan Brant, “Character Education in the University: Opportunities and Challenges,” in *Cultivating Virtue in the University*, ed. Jonathan Brant, Edward Brooks, and Michael Lamb (Oxford University Press, 2022), 253–277, esp. 258–263.

⁶ *Ibid.*

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institutions to educate character within colleges and universities. Through the creation of a network of interested institutions and educators, the development and dissemination of research and resources, the organization of conferences and convenings, and the direct awarding of grants to individuals and institutions interested in advancing this work in their own contexts, we aspire to nurture a creative, compassionate, and collaborative community of educators who can learn from each other as partners in character education.

AN INVITATION TO COMMUNITY

We hope you and your institution will consider joining this growing community. By creating and sustaining a broad-based network of individuals and institutions that serve faculty, staff, and students from different backgrounds, traditions, and disciplines, we seek to encourage diverse perspectives on character in higher education and support opportunities to learn from each other, experiment with new ideas and pedagogies, and benefit from the individual and collective wisdom of our community. We invite participation from individuals and teams from higher education-serving nonprofit and educational organizations and all two- and four-year colleges and universities—both public and private, secular and religious—including but not limited to research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, military academies, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, single-gender colleges, and tribal colleges.

Whether you are just beginning to explore an interest in educating character or have been teaching, researching, or educating character for years, we invite you to join us in one or more of the following ways:

- [Register as a member of the Educating Character Initiative community](#). Membership registration includes identifying areas of interest and ways in which you might like to contribute to the network. We envision this international network as a collaborative community of practice where we learn from and with each other, so we hope you will join not only for what you might gain but also for what you might offer.
- Attend the international webinar series on “The Flourishing Student” co-sponsored with the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues and a number of other higher education institutions ([Register here for the Flourishing Student webinar series](#)).
- Participate in a monthly virtual workshop series hosted by the Educating Character Initiative (coming January 2024).
- Attend a conference or convening hosted by the Program for Leadership and Character and Educating Character Initiative (more details to come).
- Contribute to research and resources focused on educating character.
- Apply for funding to support your own research, programming, and/or professional development through one of four types of Educating Character Initiative grants (see Request for Proposals below).

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In addition to these opportunities, grant recipients and network participants will be supported by Educating Character Initiative staff and each other as we seek to understand, implement, and expand character education within U.S. colleges and universities and to support a wider network of both individuals and institutions focused on educating character in their distinctive contexts.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “CHARACTER”?

The Educating Character Initiative welcomes diverse approaches to moral, civic, and/or intellectual character and encourages proposals motivated to promote character development in each institution’s unique population of faculty, staff, and students in context-sensitive ways.

For illustrative purposes, the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest understands character generally as “the collection of stable, deep, and enduring dispositions that define who we are and shape how we characteristically think, feel, and act.”⁷ The aim of the Program is to help students develop good dispositions or “virtues” of character that foster individual and communal flourishing and to avoid “vices” or bad dispositions that inhibit flourishing. The Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest focuses in particular on nurturing students’ sense of purpose and virtues of compassion, courage, gratitude, honesty, hope, humility, integrity, justice, kindness, resilience, temperance, and wisdom, among others. Different faculty, departments, and schools prioritize some virtues more than others and occasionally foster other virtues such as curiosity, creativity, and open-mindedness.

Overall, the Program for Leadership and Character’s approach to educating character is:

- *Community-focused* in recognizing that individual character is never developed in isolation but is informed by and directed toward particular civic, cultural, educational, religious, and social communities
- *Developmental* in recognizing that character is always in the process of being developed and can be intentionally cultivated
- *Contextually and culturally sensitive* in emphasizing that how character is developed and exercised depends on one’s context, background, and situation and that people with different identities, positionalities, and circumstances may enact virtues in different ways
- *Inclusive and pluralistic* in welcoming diverse voices, traditions, and perspectives and helping students clarify their own values and commitments in the context of such engagement

⁷ See Michael Lamb, Jonathan Brant, and Edward Brooks, “Seven Strategies for Cultivating Virtue in the University” in *Cultivating Virtue in the University*, ed. Jonathan Brant, Edward Brooks, and Michael Lamb, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 115–156.

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- *Interdisciplinary* in engaging diverse disciplinary and professional fields.⁸

To support the development of good character, the Program utilizes a framework anchored in seven evidence-based strategies for character development:

- Habituation through practice
- Reflection on personal experience
- Engagement with virtuous exemplars
- Dialogue that increases virtue literacy
- Awareness of situational variables and biases
- Moral reminders
- Friendships of mutual accountability.⁹

These strategies and others are embedded throughout the Program's curricular and co-curricular programming to support students' holistic character development. To learn more about the Program for Leadership and Character, including more information about the seven strategies, please visit our website: <https://leadershipandcharacter.wfu.edu/>.

We offer the above as an example of how the Program for Leadership and Character understands character education. While other institutions are welcome to adapt what is useful from this approach, we do not expect that other institutions have or will adopt a similar framework or orientation. Character education is not one-size-fits-all. While character education includes a set of widely shared virtues, strategies, and objectives and offers vital resources, frameworks, and examples to support faculty and staff in this work, it must be adapted to an institution's distinctive history, culture, and context and integrated in organic ways that align with an institution's core mission. Given the relational, institutional, and intercultural dynamics involved, the process of discerning and achieving such alignment is more time-consuming than any simple "plug-and-play" approach, but it also promises more potential for success and sustainability. Through the Educating Character Initiative, we hope to catalyze long-term change.

⁸ Michael Lamb and Kenneth Townsend, "Wake Forest University's Program for Leadership and Character: A Case Study," in *Multidisciplinary Handbook of Character Development*, ed. Richard M. Lerner and Michael D. Matthews (Taylor & Francis, forthcoming).

⁹ Lamb, Brant, and Brooks, "Seven Strategies for Cultivating Virtue in the University."

III. ANNOUNCEMENT OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

In 2024, the Educating Character Initiative intends to award grants to both individuals and institutions, varying in scale, focus, and expected impact.

GRANTS FOR INSTITUTIONS

In this grant cycle, we anticipate awarding up to **10 Institutional Impact Grants** of between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000, as well as **20 Capacity-Building Grants** of up to \$50,000. Successful grantees will be teams of faculty, staff, and administrators at U.S. colleges and universities with outstanding proposals for developing the moral, civic, and/or intellectual character and capacity of faculty, staff, and students.

To encourage an organic, inclusive, and context-sensitive approach, we seek to recognize the work already done to focus on character education and existing expertise at partner institutions. The Educating Character Initiative is prepared to pair the creation and dissemination of resources with context-specific support from Wake Forest staff, fellows, and consultants to aid institutions and individuals who seek to advance character education. These grants are meant to provide institutions with the time, resources, and freedom to discern what might work best in their context. Priority will be given to applications that show strong institutional support; clear alignment with the institution's mission, vision, and values; and the potential for integrating character in ways that are robust and impactful across the institution.

GRANTS FOR INDIVIDUALS

In addition to grants to institutions, we will award **5 Teacher-Scholar Grants** of up to \$15,000 and **10 Professional Development Grants** of up to \$5,000 to individuals who wish to research character education in higher education, deepen our collective understanding of character, and/or expand their capacity to educate character in their contexts. We welcome applications from individuals at all U.S. colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, or higher education organizations, including those whose institutions may not yet be part of the wider network. Project leaders and co-leaders of Institutional Impact or Capacity-Building Grants may not apply for these individual grants, though other faculty and staff at the same institution who are not part of the proposed institutional project may do so.

Details about each grant are below. If you do not feel ready to apply for a grant this year, additional grants in all four categories will be available next year and potentially in future years.

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GRANTS FOR INSTITUTIONS

1. *INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT GRANTS*

Up to 10 Institutional Impact Grants of between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000 will be awarded to institutions who wish to undertake a substantial and sustained effort to educate character in undergraduate populations across their institution. Three grants of between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000, three grants of between \$250,000 and \$500,000, and four grants of between \$100,000 and \$250,000 will be awarded. Organizations should align the size of the request with the impact of the proposed project and their expertise and capacity to steward the funds efficiently and effectively. Since funds are limited, please design projects that will have the maximum impact using the fewest resources.

These three-year grants will provide support to enable institutional leaders, faculty, and staff to infuse character in undergraduate curricula and programming in ways that align organically with their college or university mission, context, and culture. Institutional Impact Grants may be especially useful for institutions that have already begun educating character in their context and/or that have faculty and staff with the relevant expertise to undertake a major initiative dedicated to character. We imagine these grants will be focused primarily on coherent implementation rather than initial exploration, though we welcome innovative ideas that have not been fully tested.

We welcome applications from two- and four-year U. S. colleges and universities—both public and private, secular and religious—including but not limited to research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, military academies, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, single-gender colleges, and tribal colleges. We also welcome applications from cross-institutional networks of colleges, universities, and organizations that wish to collaborate on a shared project or initiative.

Potential project activities could include, but are not limited to, some or all of the following:

- The launch of a new major, minor, certificate program, or curricular requirement and/or a co-curricular center, institute, or program related to character
- New faculty, staff, or postdoctoral fellows
- Course or time buyouts, salary replacement, and/or summer funding for faculty or staff to devote time to develop a program, initiative, or course at their institution
- Credit-bearing courses and/or co-curricular programming, such as speaker events, discussion groups, retreats, and/or workshops for students, faculty, and/or staff
- A faculty/staff seminar that brings together key partners across the institution to discuss the opportunities and challenges of character education and how they might pursue it

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- Honoraria for visiting scholars, educators, or experts to generate interest in character education, lead a faculty workshop on character or strategies to educate it, and/or provide insight on how it might be integrated at their institution (Note: Individual workshops and consulting are available for free from the staff and fellows of the Educating Character Initiative.)
- Books and materials for faculty/staff seminars, reading groups, and research on character education
- Student assistants to contribute to literature reviews, data collection, or other tasks
- Survey administration and participant incentives to collect data from students, faculty, and staff related to the impact or viability of projects or initiatives
- Professional development support, such as travel and registration for relevant workshops that focus on character or character education.

We encourage institutions to be creative in how they might design, implement, and integrate character education organically in their distinctive contexts.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The application for Institutional Impact Grants will be a two-step process.

STEP 1. All accredited U.S. colleges and universities that are interested in educating character in undergraduates are invited to submit an initial application through the [ECI Grant Portal](#). You must provide:

- Contact Information for Principal Investigator(s) and Administrative Assistant(s) (if applicable)
- Contact Information for Institutional Grant Approval and Payment
- Project Name and Abstract (500-word maximum)
- Amount Requested
- Proposal Narrative addressing the following (10-page maximum):
 - A brief overview of the academic institution – its mission, vision, and the alignment of character education to its overall culture, orientation, or tradition.
 - A description of work already undertaken at the institution toward the education of character in undergraduate students and any relevant outcomes.
 - A description of the character approach that applicants intend to use for the project, noting the applicants' relevant expertise and/or experience with this approach.
 - A description of the core goals of the project.
 - A description of the project activities, including a general timeline for completion (a more detailed timeline will be requested at the full proposal stage). Grant activities may not extend beyond three years.
 - A description of the target impact and outcomes for the project. Identify who will be impacted, how the impact will be achieved, and the place of intentional

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character formation in achieving this impact. Articulate proposed outcomes, including plans for assessment and measurement of those outcomes.

- A plan for sustaining this work beyond the initial grant period.
- Curriculum vitae for the project leader(s)
- A signed letter of support from the head of the institution, such as the president, chancellor, or vice-chancellor.
- A broad budget outline (a more detailed budget will be requested in the full proposal stage). Please note that, due to limited funding, general overhead or indirect costs may not be included in the request; however, direct costs for administration, equipment, and consumable items may be included. Applicants are encouraged to determine how best to use grant funds and to show institutional support through cost-sharing or donor-matching where appropriate.
- Optional Appendices:
 - Statements of support from other institutional leaders, such as a provost, dean, or department chair.
 - Additional artifacts that support the narrative of the initial application, such as course syllabi; program descriptions; published or on-going research; descriptions of character-focused conferences, workshops, or convenings; or examples of other character-focused grants and awards.

Institutional Impact Grant applicants should be mindful of the following when determining the size of the grant request:

- The number of students impacted by the proposed project
- The number of faculty/staff impacted by the proposed project
- The unit(s) impacted by the proposed project (departments, divisions, schools, colleges, or university-wide)
- Whether the project involves collaboration across institutions
- The expected development of educational resources that can be adopted or adapted by other institutions
- The expected development of scholarly research that can inform the larger community
- The extent to which existing expertise, programs, and operational frameworks at the institution can scaffold a project of the requested size.

The Program for Leadership and Character will provide multiple opportunities for colleges and universities to convene in person and virtually to discuss topics of common interest. Since the Educating Character Initiative will be organizing major conferences and convenings for the entire network, funding to host conferences may not be included in these requests, unless plans are coordinated in advance with the staff of the Educating Character Initiative. Staff from the Educating Character Initiative will also be available to provide individualized coaching and support for faculty, staff, and student development and/or assessment, so those costs need not be included within the grant. Applicants are encouraged to determine how to show institutional support through cost-sharing and/or donor-matching where appropriate.

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Initial applications (Letters of Inquiry) are due by **February 29, 2024, at 5:00 PM ET** through the [ECI Grant Portal](#). The portal will accept completed applications beginning December 29. Responses to the initial application will be shared with applicants no later than April 16.

We will hold optional, one-hour online Q&A sessions regarding Institutional Impact applications at 12:00 pm and 4:00 pm ET on November 30 and December 11, 2023, as well as January 10, 2024. [Register for an online session here](#).

All inquiries should be directed toward ECI@wfu.edu.

STEP 2. Up to 20 institutions will be invited to submit a full and final proposal by June 17, 2024. Grant decisions will be announced by July 17, with the term of the grant to begin September 1. A copy of the full and final proposal requirements will be available by March 1 through the ECI Grant Portal.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND EXPECTATIONS FOR FUNDED PROPOSALS

The project leader(s) must be in or contracted to a long-term faculty or staff position at an accredited college or university in the United States. All applicants must [register as a member of the Educating Character Initiative community](#).

Colleges and universities may apply for an Institutional Impact or Capacity-Building Grant, but not both. Individuals may not apply for Teacher-Scholar or Professional Development Grant if they are part of a team applying for an Institutional Impact or Capacity-Building Grant. Funds may not be used for capital projects.

Funded projects and project leaders will commit to the following:

- Submit interim and final reports, including assessments of outcomes on students, faculty, and/or staff, as well as interim and final expenditure reports
- Attend at least one gathering sponsored by the Program for Leadership and Character
- Attend and present key results at a convening where they will be required to:
 - provide feedback to others and receive feedback on their own project
 - suggest avenues for future research, integration, and/or implementation
 - share the results and findings of their projects
- Consent to have their presentation(s) recorded
- For all project outputs that arise from work supported by the grant, awardees must notify the Educating Character Initiative of any significant events, presentations, or awards; submit copies of all published work or other public products to the Educating Character Initiative; and acknowledge the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University and Lilly Endowment Inc. in project publications.
- Follow stipulations of the grant award as communicated and determined by the Educating Character Initiative.

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2. CAPACITY-BUILDING GRANTS

Among the persistent challenges identified by faculty, staff, and administrators at Wake Forest's 2021 "Convening on Character in Higher Education" was a lack of resources, including difficulty integrating character across their curriculum or culture without more institutional and financial support. To address this challenge, up to **20 Capacity-Building Grants of up to \$50,000** will be awarded to institutions who wish to strengthen their ability to educate and embed character in their distinctive contexts. These grants may be especially useful for institutions that are just beginning to explore how to educate character, that are envisioning discrete projects that do not require substantial funding, and/or that need support to plan for a larger grant application to the Educating Character Initiative or another funding organization in a future year.

Potential project activities could include, but are not limited to, some or all of the following:

- Course or time buyouts, salary replacement, and/or summer funding for individual faculty or staff to devote time to planning or implementing a program, initiative, or course at their institution
- Credit-bearing courses and/or co-curricular programming, such as speaker events, discussion groups, retreats, and/or workshops for students, faculty, and/or staff
- A faculty/staff seminar that brings together key partners across the institution to discuss the opportunities and challenges of character education and how they might pursue it
- Honoraria for visiting scholars, educators, or experts to generate interest in character education, lead a faculty workshop on character or strategies to educate it, and/or provide insight on how it might be integrated at their institution (Note: Individual workshops and consulting are available for free from the staff and fellows of the Educating Character Initiative.)
- Books and materials for faculty/staff seminars, reading groups, and research on character education
- Student assistants to contribute to literature reviews, data collection, or other tasks
- Survey administration and participant incentives to collect data from students, faculty, and staff related to the impact or viability of projects or initiatives
- Professional development support, such as travel and registration for relevant workshops that focus on character or character education
- Funding and time to plan and apply for a larger grant from the Educating Character Initiative or other grant-making institutions.

We welcome applications from two- and four-year colleges and universities—both public and private, secular and religious—including but not limited to research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, military academies, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, single-gender colleges, and tribal colleges. We also welcome applications from cross-institutional networks of colleges, universities, and organizations

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that wish to collaborate on a shared project or initiative.

Because we are eager to support diverse approaches to character education and learn from thoughtful experimentations, we encourage project leaders to be intentional and creative in building the necessary support and capacity to educate character across their institutions. Given limited funding, we also encourage project leaders to be frugal with resources and intentional about which funds are most necessary to achieve the project's aims.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Interested applicants for the Capacity-Building Grants should apply through the [ECI Grant Portal](#). You must provide:

- Contact Information for Principal Investigator(s) and Administrative Assistant(s) (if applicable)
- Contact Information for Institutional Grant Approval and Payment
- Project Name and Abstract (500-word maximum)
- Amount Requested (\$50,000 maximum)
- Proposal narrative addressing the following (10-page maximum)
 - An overview of the academic institution – its mission, vision, and the alignment of character education to its overall culture, orientation, or tradition.
 - A description of work already undertaken at the institution toward the education of character in undergraduate students and any relevant outcomes.
 - A description of both the character and capacity-building approaches to educating character in the undergraduate student population that applicants intend to use for the project, noting the relevant expertise and/or experience of the applicants. If the project aims to determine the most appropriate character frameworks, orientations, or approaches for the institution, please explain how this discernment will proceed.
 - A description of the core goals of the project.
 - A description of project activities and explanation of why ECI support is necessary to complete these activities.
 - A description of the target impact and outcomes relating to both educating character and building capacity, including how those outcomes will be achieved as well as assessed or measured.
 - A timeline of activities, to extend not more than one year beginning in Summer 2024.
 - A plan for sustaining this work beyond the initial grant period.
- Curriculum vitae for the project leader(s)
- Signed letter of support from the head of the institution, such as the president, chancellor, or vice-chancellor.

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- Budget, including (minimally) separate lines for faculty engagement & curriculum development, student programming, research & assessment, personnel, and other character-related training costs, separated by year of the award period. A budget template will be available in the ECI Grant Portal beginning December 29. Due to limited funding, general overhead or indirect costs may not be included in the request; however, direct costs for administration, equipment, and consumable items may be included. Applicants are encouraged to determine how best to use grant funds and to show institutional support through cost-sharing and donor-matching where appropriate.
- Optional appendices:
 - Statements of support from other institutional leaders, such as a provost, dean, or department chair.
 - Additional artifacts that support the narrative of the initial application, such as course syllabi; program descriptions; published or on-going research; a description of character-focused conferences, workshops, or convenings; or descriptions of grants and awards focused on character formation.

The Program for Leadership and Character will provide multiple opportunities for colleges and universities to convene in person and virtually to discuss topics of common interest. Since the Educating Character Initiative will be organizing major conferences and convenings for the entire network, funding to host conferences may not be included in these requests, unless plans are coordinated in advance with the staff of the Educating Character Initiative. Staff from the Educating Character Initiative will also be available to provide individualized coaching and support for faculty, staff, and student development and/or assessment, so those costs need not be included within the grant.

The submission deadline for the application is **February 29, 2024, at 5:00 PM ET** through the [ECI Grant Portal](#). The portal will accept completed applications beginning December 29. Award decisions will be issued by May 10 for projects to begin on August 1.

We will hold optional, one-hour online Q&A sessions regarding Capacity-Building Grants at 11:00 am and 3:00 pm ET on November 30 and December 11, 2023, as well as January 10, 2024. [Register for an online session here](#).

All inquiries should be directed toward ECI@wfu.edu.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND EXPECTATIONS FOR FUNDED PROPOSALS

The project leader(s) must be in or contracted to a long-term faculty or staff position at an accredited college or university in the United States. All applicants must [register as a member of the Educating Character Initiative community](#).

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Colleges and Universities may apply for an Institutional Impact or Capacity-Building Grant, but not both. Individuals may not apply for a Teacher-Scholar or Professional Development Grant if they are part of a team applying for an Institutional Impact or Capacity-Building Grant.

Funded projects and project leaders will commit to the following:

- Submit interim and final reports, including assessments of outcomes on students, faculty, and/or staff, as well as interim and final expenditure reports
- Attend at least one gathering sponsored by the Program for Leadership and Character
- Attend and present key results at a convening where they will be required to:
 - provide feedback to others and receive feedback on their own project
 - suggest avenues for future research, integration, and/or implementation
 - share the results and findings of their projects
- Consent to have their presentation(s) recorded
- For all project outputs that arise from work supported by the grant, awardees must notify the Educating Character Initiative of any significant events, presentations, or awards; submit copies of all published work or other public products to the Educating Character Initiative; and acknowledge the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University and Lilly Endowment Inc. in project publications.
- Follow stipulations of the grant award as communicated and determined by the Educating Character Initiative.

GRANTS FOR INDIVIDUALS

3. *TEACHER-SCHOLAR GRANTS*

Teacher-Scholar Grants (up to \$15,000 each) will be awarded to individuals who wish to research character and/or character education in undergraduate higher education and/or develop specific projects or resources aimed at strengthening their institution's and the larger network's capacity to educate character effectively. We welcome proposals on any project relevant to character in higher education, but preference will be given to those that focus on understanding why and how character education might support the educational mission of colleges and universities; examining which virtues and strategies are particularly relevant for undergraduate students; determining which measures are needed to assess character growth in emerging adults; and/or exploring how faculty and staff can integrate those virtues, strategies, and measures into their disciplinary, curricular, and co-curricular offerings. This research could include theoretical and/or empirical research as well as practical research that applies these insights to different disciplinary or institutional contexts. Given that research is the currency of the academy, this work will be vital not only in equipping university leaders with valuable resources but also demonstrating the value and impact of this work in ways that might support a larger community within higher education.

Ultimately, these grants will support individuals in developing their scholarly expertise in character education within higher education, expand the pipeline of scholars doing research on character education in colleges and universities, and increase knowledge-sharing and pedagogical innovation across institutions, disciplines, and the network. We expect that some grant recipients may offer workshops or present research at our conferences and convenings, publish resources that could be useful for the larger network, and/or serve as consultants or advisory board members based on their expertise.

Depending on faculty interests and needs, grant activities could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Course buy-outs, summer funding, or salary replacement for faculty to focus on research or pedagogical development related to character in the higher education context
- Travel funds to present research on character at conferences or get feedback on a book manuscript (see also Professional Development Grants below)
- Student research assistants (graduate or undergraduate)
- Books, materials, or software for research, assessment, or course development
- Participant incentives to conduct studies
- Partial support of a postdoctoral fellow (that could be matched with institutional or departmental support)

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The Program for Leadership and Character will provide multiple opportunities for individuals to convene in person and virtually to discuss topics of common interest. Since the Educating Character Initiative will be organizing major conferences and convenings for the entire network, funding to host conferences may not be included in these requests, unless plans are coordinated in advance with the staff of the Educating Character Initiative. Staff from the Educating Character Initiative will also be available to provide individualized coaching and support for faculty, staff, and student development and/or assessment, so those costs need not be included within the grant.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The full application will be available in the [ECI Grant Portal](#). You must provide:

- Contact Information for the Principal Investigator(s), Administrative Assistant (if applicable), and Department or Supervisor (if applicable)
- Project Name and Abstract (500-word maximum)
- Amount Requested (\$15,000 maximum)
- A description of the character approach to be used in the project (500-word maximum)
- A description of the core research, program, curricular, or other goals (500-word maximum)
- A description of project activities and explanation of why ECI support is necessary to complete these activities (250-word maximum)
- A description of target impact and outcomes, including how those outcomes will be assessed or measured as well as expected scholarly publications or research products (500-word maximum)
- Curriculum vitae for the project leader(s)
- Project Timeline
- Budget, including separate lines for personnel, travel & registration costs, books & research material costs, and other character-related training costs, separated by year of expenditure. A budget template will be available in ECI Grant Portal beginning December 29.

The submission deadline for the application is **January 29, 2024, at 5:00 PM ET** through the [ECI Grant Portal](#). The portal will accept completed applications beginning December 29, 2023. Award decisions will be issued by March 15.

We will hold optional, one-hour online Q&A sessions regarding Teacher-Scholar Grants at 2:00 pm ET on November 30 and December 11, 2023, as well as January 10, 2024. [Register for an online session here.](#)

All inquiries should be directed to ECI@wfu.edu.

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GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND EXPECTATIONS FOR FUNDED PROPOSALS

The project leader(s) must be in a faculty or staff position at an accredited college or university in the United States or, alternatively, must hold a relevant position in a registered nonprofit organization. All applicants must [register as a member of the Educating Character Initiative community](#).

Individuals may apply for either a Teacher-Scholar or Professional Development Grant, but not both. Individuals may not apply for a Teacher-Scholar or Professional Development Grant if they are part of a team applying for an Institutional Impact or Capacity-Building Grant.

Funded projects and project leaders will commit to the following:

- Submit interim and final reports, including assessments of outcomes on students, faculty, and/or staff, as well as interim and final expenditure reports
- Attend at least one gathering sponsored by the Program for Leadership and Character
- Attend and present key results at a convening where they will be required to:
 - provide feedback to others and receive feedback on their own project
 - suggest avenues for future research, integration, and/or implementation
 - share the results and findings of their projects
- Consent to have their presentation(s) recorded
- For all project outputs that arise from work supported by the grant, awardees must notify the Educating Character Initiative of any significant events, presentations, or awards; submit copies of all published work or other public products to the Educating Character Initiative; and acknowledge the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University and Lilly Endowment Inc. in project publications.
- Follow stipulations of the grant award as communicated and determined by the Educating Character Initiative.

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4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Professional Development Grants (up to \$5,000) are intended to equip faculty and staff to become educators of character or lead efforts to educate character at their institutions.

Grant support could include, but are not limited to, funding for the following:

- Travel and registration for individuals or teams of faculty and staff to attend or present at character-related conferences or convenings
- A faculty/staff seminar, pedagogical workshop, or visiting speaker to support faculty and staff in learning about character and how to educate it
- Books, materials, or resources to support faculty and staff's intellectual, professional, and/or pedagogical development
- A character-related training or certification

The Program for Leadership and Character will provide multiple opportunities for individuals to convene in person and virtually to discuss topics of common interest. Since the Educating Character Initiative will be organizing major conferences and convenings for the entire network, funding to host conferences may not be included in these requests, unless plans are coordinated in advance with the staff of the Educating Character Initiative. Staff from the Educating Character Initiative will also be available to provide individualized coaching and support for faculty, staff, and student development and/or assessment, so those costs need not be included within the grant.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The full application will be available in the [ECI Grant Portal](#). You must provide:

- Contact Information for Applicant, Administrative Assistant (if applicable), and Department or Supervisor (if applicable).
- Project Name and Summary (500-word maximum)
- Amount Requested (\$5,000 maximum)
- A description of why this professional development is important to you and/or your institution and how it will affect your work going forward (500-word maximum)
- A description of the core activities to be completed through the grant, including why ECI support is necessary to complete these activities (250-word maximum)
- A description of target impact and outcomes that will be realized by the end of the professional development and how you will assess any change in your character, knowledge, capacities, or skills (250-word maximum)
- Curriculum Vitae
- Project Timeline

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- Budget, including separate lines for travel & registration costs, books & research material costs, and other character-related training costs, separated by year of expenditure. A budget template will be available in ECI Grant Portal beginning December 29. Given limited grant funding, we encourage applicants to request funds only for the most essential activities.

The submission deadline for the application is **January 29, 2024 at 5:00 PM ET** through the [ECI Grant Portal](#). The portal will accept completed applications beginning December 29. Award decisions will be issued by March 15.

We will hold optional, one-hour online Q&A sessions regarding Professional Development Grants at 10:00 am ET on November 30 and December 11, 2023, as well as January 10, 2024. [Register for an online session here.](#)

All inquiries should be directed toward ECI@wfu.edu.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND EXPECTATIONS FOR FUNDED PROPOSALS

The project leader(s) must be in a faculty or staff position at an accredited college or university in the United States or, alternatively, must hold a relevant position in a registered nonprofit organization. All applicants must [register as a member of the Educating Character Initiative community](#).

Individuals may apply for either a Teacher-Scholar or Professional Development Grant, but not both. Individuals may not apply for a Teacher-Scholar or Professional Development Grant if they are part of a team applying for an Institutional Impact or Capacity-Building grant.

Funded projects and project leaders will commit to the following:

- Submit final reports, including assessments of outcomes.
- Attend at least one virtual or in-person gathering sponsored by the Program for Leadership and Character.
- For all project outputs that arise from work supported by the grant, awardees must notify the Educating Character Initiative of any significant events, presentations, or awards; submit copies of all published work or other public products to the Educating Character Initiative; and acknowledge the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University and Lilly Endowment Inc., in project publications.
- Follow stipulations of the grant award as communicated and determined by the Educating Character Initiative.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest is delighted to have the opportunity to expand its impact through the Educating Character Initiative. We are grateful to Lilly Endowment Inc. for its commitment to this vision and look forward with enthusiasm to expanding the community of character educators within higher education. Over this next year and beyond, the Program aspires to empower generative partnerships with and among individual faculty and staff and undergraduate institutions—partnerships of mutual learning organized around creative and thoughtful new projects in character education. We hope you will join us.



THE PROGRAM FOR
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APPENDIX A: DATES TO REMEMBER

	Institutional Impact Grant
Info Sessions (optional)	Nov 30 & Dec 11, 2023 Jan 10, 2024 12 – 1 pm & 4 – 5 pm ET on Zoom Register here
Initial Application / Letter of Inquiry	February 29, 2024; portal accepting submissions beginning December 29, 2023
Decisions about Initial Applications	April 16, 2024
Full Proposal Due	June 17, 2024
Grant Decisions	July 17, 2024
Grant Start Date	September 1, 2024 or as decided by grant agreement

	Capacity-Building Grant	Teacher-Scholar Grant	Professional Development Grant
Info Sessions (optional)	Nov 30 & Dec 11, 2023 Jan 10, 2024 11 am – 12 pm & 3 – 4 pm ET on Zoom Register here	Nov 30 & Dec 11, 2023 Jan 10, 2024 2 – 3 pm ET on Zoom Register here	Nov 30 & Dec 11, 2023 Jan 10, 2024 10 – 11 am ET on Zoom Register here
ECI Portal opens	Dec 29, 2023 is the earliest date to submit completed applications.		
Grant Due	February 29, 2024	January 29, 2024	January 29, 2024
Grant Decisions	May 1, 2024	March 15, 2024	March 15, 2024
Grant Start Date	July 1, 2024 or as decided by grant agreement	May 1, 2024 or as decided by grant agreement	May 1, 2024 or as decided by grant agreement

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest, including details of what we do and how we do it, visit <https://leadershipandcharacter.wfu.edu/>.

For more information on the Seven Strategies, see [this page](#) on our website, or Michael Lamb, Jonathan Brant and Edward Brooks, “Seven Strategies for Cultivating Virtue in the University” in *Cultivating Virtue in the University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 115–156.

For a guide to institutional approaches to character development, including 16 helpful questions that institutions should ask, see Anne Snyder, *The Fabric of Character: A Wise Giver’s Guide to Supporting Social and Moral Renewal* (The Philanthropy Roundtable, 2019).