SEARCH PROFILE:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NETWORK OF ELCA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
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The Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU) invites inquiries, nominations, and applications for its Executive Director. The Executive Director is charged with articulating the mission of NECU in support of the strategic goals of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), working closely with the presidents of its college and university member institutions. The new Executive Director will lead the implementation of NECU’s approved strategic plan for 2022-2025 and strengthen relationships with NECU’s institutional partners. The expected start date for the Executive Director is January 2, 2023.
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with nearly 3.3 million members in more than 8,900 worshiping communities. Since its beginning in 1988, the ELCA has been one church body organized in three expressions — congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization.

The churchwide organization is based out of the Lutheran Center in Chicago, IL, and functions with the ELCA’s 65 synods and nearly 10,000 congregations across the 50 states, Caribbean and U.S. Virgin Islands. The churchwide organization’s work and functions are guided by the Churchwide Assembly, the Church Council and four elected officers. Its staff and elected officers work at the Lutheran Center and in other locations around the world, serving as administrators, advisors, conveners, partners, and resource people for the ELCA and its ministries.

The ELCA also nurtures important connections with Lutheran, ecumenical, and interfaith partners and related organizations, including within higher education. Through 2010, oversight of churchwide ministries in higher education was managed by the staff of various divisions or program units inside the ELCA’s churchwide organization. Between 2011 and 2015, however, the churchwide organization explored restructuring its work in higher education by bringing presidents of ELCA colleges and universities directly into churchwide leadership. To achieve this restructuring, the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU) was established. Its guiding purposes are set forth in the 2015 document “Shared Identity and Shared Work: A Proposal to Restructure the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities.”

Today, NECU includes 27 colleges and universities (26 in the United States and 1 in Canada). NECU articulates a vision for Lutheran higher education in North America that finds expression in the rich and diverse missions of its member institutions. To support the distinctive strengths of these institutions and their common calling in higher education, NECU sustains relationships among its member institutions and with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. In addition, NECU provides leadership development and other collaborative opportunities for its member institutions.

The Executive Director of NECU and the presidents of its member institutions constitute the board of directors of the organization. The day-to-day responsibilities of the organization are lodged with an executive committee composed of seven college/university presidents, the Executive Director of Christian Community and Leadership in the ELCA’s Churchwide Organization, and NECU’s Executive Director.
The Executive Director reports to the Senior Director of Education for Leadership in the ELCA’s Churchwide Organization and oversees an administrative assistant. Although the churchwide headquarters is in Chicago, IL, this person will have the capacity to work remotely.

The new Executive Director will, in collaboration with NECU’s Executive Committee, lead the implementation of the 2022-2025 strategic plan (outlined below).

STRATEGIC PLAN, 2022-2025

GOAL I: Deepen the understanding of the rich diversity of Lutheran identity at NECU Institutions.

- Strategy 1: Expand dialogue in and among NECU Institutions and develop a resource repository to support such dialogue.
- Strategy 2: Affirm Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as a core commitment of Lutheran identity.

GOAL II: Enhance Lutheran distinctiveness through increased inter-institutional collaborations.

- Strategy 1: Increase opportunities for inter-institutional collaborations.
- Strategy 2: Strengthen leadership development opportunities.

GOAL III: Strengthen NECU’s relationship with the ELCA.

- Strategy 1: Increase collaborations with the churchwide organization.
- Strategy 2: Improve ties with synods and congregations.

The Executive Director will work closely with the presidents and other key staff at member institutions, consulting regularly both in person and virtually. Regular travel to NECU campuses and to churchwide headquarters is expected, as is travel to represent NECU at events for the Lutheran Educational Conference of North America, for which NECU’s Executive Director serves as a member of the Board of Directors. The Executive Director also serves as representative of the church and Board of NECU on college and university governing boards, including during presidential searches, oversees the convening of college corporation meetings concurrent with the Churchwide Assembly, and serves as Lead Director for the ELCA on the Board of Directors for the Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators, Inc. In addition, the Executive Director represents the church and NECU to secular higher education groups and agencies and the federal Department of Education, and directs and administers programs, grants, and scholarships to sustain and strengthen NECU within the mission of the ELCA.
REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

- Master’s degree
- Successful experience in a position of leadership that demonstrates increasing levels of responsibility and accomplishment within an academic institution or higher education consortium setting
- Willingness to travel on behalf of and represent NECU (up to 25%; valid driver’s license and passport required)

DESIRED SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

- Doctorate or terminal degree
- Capacity to sustain and reinforce the ELCA’s distinctive mission, vision, and values
- Demonstrated knowledge of the role of the Churchwide Organization in educational programs and institutions and the challenges being faced by NECU’s member institutions
- Demonstrated commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts
- Successful experience in strategic planning and program development
- Ability to make connections and create a network to help support member institution leaders
- Strong organizational skills with the ability to simultaneously handle the regular demands of intersecting projects
- Ability to build bridges and interact successfully with diverse constituent groups; to support, inspire, and collaborate with diverse personalities and lead them toward increasingly stronger performance
- An open, authentic, and highly relational individual with high emotional intelligence, who demonstrates a high level of integrity, trust, and resourcefulness
- A self-starter who advances a clear set of priorities with efficiency and has proven capacity to identify and frame fundamental issues
- A skilled, strategic manager of budgetary resources
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to listen closely and exude executive presence
- Experience with utilizing social media platforms as communication and networking tools
Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is being assisted by Academic Search. Prospective candidates may arrange a confidential discussion by contacting Jack Ohle at Jack.Ohle@academicsearch.org or Andrea Cowsert at Andrea.Cowsert@academicsearch.org. Nominations may also be sent directly to Jack Ohle and Andrea Cowsert. To apply and view the full job description, click here.

Applications must include a cover letter that addresses the responsibilities and requirements described in this position prospectus, including specifically the candidate’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; a curriculum vitae and/or a resume of work experience; and a list of at least five professional references with contact information, including telephone and email, and a note indicating the candidate’s working relationship with each. References will not be contacted without the explicit permission of the candidate. This position is open until filled, but only applications received by September 21, 2022, can be assured full consideration. To learn more about the ELCA and NECU, visit www.elca.org.

The ELCA offers a competitive benefits package for eligible employees, including employer paid health premiums for employees, health and dependent care FSA's, a health savings account (HSA) with an employer contribution, life insurance, and a substantial employer contribution to 403b retirement plan (no match required). We also offer a generous paid time-off policy including 11 paid holidays. All benefits commence on your start date.
ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

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