



UNISERVITATE

Call for small funds for research projects in Service-Learning in Catholic Higher Education 2025/26

INTRODUCTION

Uniservitate is a program aimed at promoting service-learning (SL) in Catholic higher education institutions. Its goal is to foster systemic change within these institutions by institutionalizing SL as a tool to fulfill their mission of providing holistic education to new generations and engaging them in active commitment to contemporary challenges.

Uniservitate is a global network that seeks to establish strong and constructive connections among educational institutions in diverse cultural and social contexts. It aims to expand dialogue and enrich the perspective of higher education, embracing the multicultural reality that characterizes the contemporary landscape.

General Objective of the Call

Aligned with its mission, *Uniservitate* launches this second call for applications for small research grants to be implemented during 2025-2026. The objective of this call is to support studies on the role of service-learning (SL) in Catholic higher education institutions. The Uniservitate program will distribute €70,000 globally (€10,000 for each of the seven regional hubs). Each hub will allocate its funding among applicants based on regional criteria and timelines.

The grants aim to fund projects focused on one of the following themes:

1. The spiritual dimension of service-learning.
2. The contribution of service-learning to the identity and mission of Catholic higher education institutions.
3. Processes of institutionalizing service-learning in Catholic higher education institutions.
4. Evidence of the contribution of service-learning to the holistic education of university students.

Specific Objectives of the Thematic Areas

- 1. Spiritual Dimension of Service-Learning (SL):**
 - Identify methodologies, didactic models, and SL resources that positively impact the spiritual development of students and the educational community.
 - Investigate the role of faith-based values and the unique characteristics of different charisms in the implementation of SL.
 - Identify strategies and best practices for institutionally integrating spirituality into SL projects, programs, and courses.
 - Explore the relationships between theology, spirituality, and service-learning.



2. Solidarity Service-Learning contribution to the mission and identity of Catholic higher education institutions:

- Examine the ways in which SL can contribute to achieving institutional objectives such as social justice, community engagement, and ethical leadership aligned with institutional mission and identity.
- Develop and analyze strategies to strengthen the connection between SL and the mission and identity of Catholic higher education institutions.

3. Processes of Institutionalizing SL in the Specific Contexts of Catholic higher education institutions:

- Study the factors that facilitate or hinder the institutionalization of SL in Catholic higher education institutions.
- Identify effective models for integrating SL into institutional policies, structures, and practices.
- Develop evidence-based SL strategies (repositories of collaborative practices, forums, networks, and resources) for institutional leaders and administrators to promote, sustain, and scale SL programs.

4. Evidence of SL's Impact on Holistic Education:

- Assess the impact of SL on the academic, personal, spiritual, and professional development of students.
- Evaluate the impact of SL on the personal, spiritual, and professional development of university community members.
- Measure SL's impact on social and community development.
- Identify indicators and methods to evaluate the impact of SL on different stakeholders (students, faculty, institutional leaders, and the community).

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR SUBMISSIONS

1. Types of Projects

Projects may be submitted by individual researchers (holding a Doctorate or Master's degree) or by research groups. Research teams may include graduate researchers, community partners, or undergraduate/graduate students under the guidance of a professor/researcher. Projects that involve multiple institutions and regions are especially encouraged.

This call especially encourages the submission of projects that address the spiritual dimension of service-learning.



2. Duration

Each region will define and announce its own timeline according to its academic calendar.

3. Applicant Requirements

Applicants must be formally affiliated with Catholic Higher Education Institutions supported by or members of Uniservitate, or institutions that have applied to become members. An endorsement letter from the institution is required.

4. Submission Form

0. Country/Hub
1. Title of the research project
2. Thematic area of study (select one or more of the mentioned thematic areas)
3. Name of the individual researcher or project director (University of...; ORCID)
4. Names of the research team members (if applicable); ORCID.
5. A brief bio (1 paragraph) including prior experience in the field of SL or Community Engagement. It is recommended (but not mandatory) to include up to three bibliographic references to works on SL.
6. Objectives.
7. Research questions.
8. Theoretical framework.
9. Methodology.
10. Contribution, relevance, and transferability of results.
11. Activity timeline (may include plans to disseminate and share results with community partners).
12. Budget (The budget for this project prohibits the inclusion of general/overhead expenses).
13. References.
14. If applicable, approval of the project by the Ethics Committee of the home institution.

5. Project Submission

Projects must be submitted to the regional Uniservitate hub within the opening and closing dates of the Call.

To do so, applicants must complete and attach:

- Project Submission Form.
- Endorsement letter from the member institution or an institution supported by Uniservitate.

All required documentation for submission will be available online and accessible to the Hubs.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. Alignment with the Call Objectives



- The proposed research must focus on topics related to SL in Catholic higher education, considering the bibliography from the [Uniservitate Collection](#) and the [Uniservitate Repository](#).
 - The proposed research addresses one or more of the four thematic areas outlined in this call.
- 2. Clarity of Purpose**
- The focus and objectives of the proposed research align with the pedagogical approach of service-learning, are explicitly stated, and resonate with the institution's mission.
 - The research question(s) are clearly established.
 - The research question(s) are of sufficient scale and scope given the schedule, budget, and overall design of the project.

3. Importance of the Research

- The research builds on prior studies and existing knowledge in the field of SL.
- The research addresses a topic or set of topics that are novel (i.e., insufficiently studied) or provides an innovative or comparative approach in the field of SL and/or SL in Catholic higher education.
- The research advances key issues in the study and/or practice of SL in Catholic higher education.
- A conceptual framework, theoretical model, theory of change, or hypothesis is presented to justify the proposed study.
- The proposed research reflects significant contextual factors regarding community needs and regional nuances where the study is situated.

4. Quality of Research Design

- The study design is appropriate for the proposed research questions.
- The proposed research methods align with the research questions and objectives. Methods may include qualitative, quantitative, or mixed approaches, depending on the nature of the study.
- The research may be designed from various epistemological perspectives, including but not limited to participatory and interpretative research. The epistemological perspectives of the proposed study should be described.
- The proposal clearly outlines data collection and analysis procedures, demonstrating a systematic and well-developed research process.
- The nature and number of participants and/or sites included in the study are detailed.
- Instruments and approaches for data collection are adequately described.
- The tools researchers will use to organize and analyze the collected data are appropriate.
- The timeline for completing the study is suitable.
- Issues related to human subject research, ethics, and necessary participant accommodations have been considered.

5. Impact and Dissemination Strategy

- The research has the potential to be shared through the global Uniservitate network (e.g., during the VI Global Symposium, November 2025) and to be published in academic journals and non-academic outlets to reach a broader audience.
- Includes evidence of the relevance and usefulness of the research results for various stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty, institutional leaders, and community partners).
- The plan to disseminate the research results is well-articulated and robust, including outreach and sharing with community partners or similar stakeholders.

6. Researcher Preparation or Composition of the Research Team

- The research team members are well-prepared and possess the background or support needed to successfully carry out the research project, both methodologically and in terms of SL knowledge.
- Consideration has been given to any additional support, training, or funding the researchers might require.

7. Budget Management

- The proposed budget is sufficient to complete the research project, or other funds are available to cover the necessary budget.
- The budgeted items are appropriate and directly related to the research project.

8. Ethics

- Selected projects must comply with requirements for results communication, privacy protection, and care for vulnerable individuals.

Reference Documents

- CLAYSS:
 - <https://clayss.org/recursos>
 - <https://clayss.org/es/acerca-de-la-jias>
- *Uniservitate*.
 - Collection: <https://www.uniservitate.org/es/publicaciones/>
 - Repository: <https://repository.uniservitate.org/>
- FIUC: http://www.fiuc.org/index_es.html
- PEG:
<https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/resources/Risorse/vademecum-espanol.pdf>
- Congregational Documents
- Documents from Uniservitate hubs, IARSLCE and other AYSS networks.



UNISERVITATE

Aprendizaje-Servicio Solidario en la Educación Superior Católica

GLOSSARY

Solidarity Service-Learning . Experiences, projects, practices, courses or institutional programs of solidarity service with the community, actively led by students, and intentionally articulated with academic content and research programs. It is a pedagogical proposal that generates significant learning, and allows learning based on real problems with the aim of offering concrete solutions, strengthening comprehensive training.

CLAYSS: Latin American Center for Service-Learning

IFCU: International Federation of Catholic Universities

IARSLCE: International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement

JIAS: Service-Learning Researchers 'Symposium

GCE: Global Compact on Education

RIDAS: Ibero-American Service-Learning Journal