

New Vocation Promoter Orientation

Entering a new ministry always poses many challenges. There are always many questions. This Vocation Promoter Orientation book is designed to help with the transition to vocation ministry. By reading through all the enclosed information and using the reference sources offered, many questions will be answered and the beginning of a new ministry may be a bit easier. All new vocation directors are asked to visit with current and past individuals in this ministry. Ask about the ups and downs and the dos and don'ts of the ministry. Learn from their wisdom and years of experience.

During the orientation process, this manual will be very helpful. Also, spend time with the National Vocation Director who will help you in the transition. No question is insignificant. Ask whatever is on your mind. Learn the ropes of the office...the reason for travel...interaction with candidates...planning an event...and many other aspects of the ministry. It is important to the success of your ministry that you learn as much as you can during orientation. But do not be fooled! You will not learn everything in a week or two. Be prepared to ask many questions in your first few weeks and months (maybe even years!).

The rest of this document outlines the Admissions Guidelines for the Society of the Divine Word, shares a list of the essential information for discerning candidates, especially as it relates to admission at Divine Word College, and outlines professional development requirements and opportunities.

In addition, please visit the National Religious Vocation Conference's [website](#). As a member of the vocation team, you have a membership to NRVC, which provides many workshops on vocation ministry. Three are required as part of your orientation to this new ministry: Orientation Program for New Vocations, Ethical Issues in Vocation and Formation Ministry, and Behavioral Assessment I. Also visit NRVC website for the document on [Code of Ethics for Vocation Ministry](#).

As a team, we will support you in your learning and in your new ministry. We will work together to achieve common goals. Welcome Aboard!

Contact Mr. Len Uhal, National Vocation Director, for any questions or further inquiries at luhal@dwci.edu.

Society of the Divine Word

Tri-Province National Vocation Office

Admission Guidelines

Many sources outline policies and guidelines to be used by Vocation Directors in recruiting candidates for the Society of the Divine Word. Included among these are the Divine Word College Administration Policy Manual, the DWC Catalog, the Chicago Province Policy Book, SVD Constitutions, and the Program for Priestly Formation (PPF) established by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). In writing the revised PPF, the NCCB relied on writings of Pope John Paul II (including *Pastores dabo vobis*, *Novo millennio ineunte*, and *Ecclesia in America*, Documents of the Second Vatican Council and other documents of the universal Church.

In an effort to try and pull all of these sources together into one document, the following guidelines have been established to assist SVD Vocation Directors in their ministry. These guidelines are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all possible candidate scenarios, but they outline some of the more common situations and often asked questions.

General Admission Characteristics

1. SVD Constitutions

- Candidates must have a desire to proclaim the Word of God to all.
- They must be ready to go to wherever the superior sends them in order to fulfill our missionary mandate, even if this entails leaving his own country, language and culture.
- Candidates must be willing to work with the poor and oppressed.
- Applicants to the SVD must demonstrate positive evidence of:
 - sound physical and mental health
 - a religious spirit appropriate to the candidate's age
 - the necessary talent for the education required
 - social skills appropriate to the candidate's age
 - active participation in the life of the Church
 - concern and openness for the missionary ideal and vocation

2. Divine Word College Admission Policies

- The vocation director working with the candidate prepares a written assessment of the applicant for the Admissions Committee addressing the following issues:

- a religious spirit appropriate to the candidate's age indicating a missionary calling
 - active participation in the life of the Church as evidenced by involvement in his local parish or other volunteer service projects
 - the necessary talent for the education required
 - willingness to live in an intercultural environment
 - sound physical and mental health
 - ability to accept responsibility
 - a sense of purpose in life
 - social skills appropriate to the candidate's age
 - the capacity for and a demonstrated pattern of lived celibacy for an appropriate period
- Educational appropriateness must be demonstrated for admission to Divine Word College. Please refer to the College Catalog for details.

3. Program for Priestly Formation

- Candidates for admission to a formation program should have attained, at least in some measure, growth in the four pillars (or integrated dimensions) of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.
- The principle of gradualism applies. Applicants seeking admission to a formation program ought to demonstrate a greater measure of maturity or a greater development of qualities as they seek admission to programs that are more proximate preparation for perpetual vows and ordination. A progressively higher level of expectations is to be sought as the applicant seeks admission to the various levels of preparation.
- Applicants must give evidence of an overall personal balance, good moral character, and proper motivation.
- College formation programs should accept only those applicants who have made a basic discernment that God may be calling them. Theologates should accept only those candidates who humbly believe that God is calling them and who desire the Church's confirmation of that call.
- Applicants should undergo a thorough screening process. Personal interviews with the applicants, evaluations from their pastors and teachers, previous seminary evaluations if applicable, academic records, and standardized test scores are all components of an effective admission program and must be weighed with a judgment of the applicant's motivation.
- Applicants from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds should be actively encouraged. Academic requirements should not be lessened, but necessary adaptations may be made to enable admission into the regular courses of study.

Students born and/or educated outside of the U.S. should develop their skills so they can preach, adequately write, and easily communicate in English.

- Students entering theology studies should have a bachelor's degree or an equivalent, have 30 semester hours of philosophy classes, and 12 semester hours of appropriate courses in undergraduate theology.
- The admission process should include a thorough physical examination and psychological assessment. Sufficient attention to family background must be given in the application process.
- An open and frank discussion of the life experiences which applicants would bring to the formation program should be part of the application process. Any concerns about family dysfunction, unresolved human issues or the need for therapeutic assistance should be dealt with before the applicant enters a formation program.
- If an applicant has no previous preparation in a formation program, the pre-theology program will normally extend over a two-year period.

Affiliation with another Religious Community or Diocese

- If an applicant has been dismissed from a formation program or from an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, no subsequent applications will be considered in the two years following the dismissal. If the departure was other than a dismissal, sufficient time should be allotted to evaluate carefully his application and background (generally at least a year).
- If an applicant has been in a formation program before, with a diocese or religious community, vocation directors must consult previous institutions about the past record of these applicants. A letter of recommendation from the rector, dean, or formation director must accompany the candidate's application.

Age

- In general, the SVD in the United States actively recruits young men 35 years of age and younger.
- If a candidate over the age of 35 expresses interest in the Society, an age waiver must be obtained from the Chicago Province Provincial Council before the candidate can enter a formation program.

- Candidates over age 35 who already have a BA degree are more apt to receive an age waiver than candidates without a BA degree, but there is no guarantee and other issues are likely to be considered in the request for the waiver.
- Candidates over the age of 45 are generally considered to be “too old” to enter formation with the SVD. However, all candidates can be brought before the Provincial Council for an age waiver and individual circumstances will be considered (i.e., an individual already has a BA in Philosophy or a MA in Theology, or some life experience that will allow that individual to enter ministry in a relatively short amount of time).

Converts to the Faith (or Re-Entry to Catholicism)

- Careful screening should be given to applicants who are recent converts to Catholicism or who have lapsed in the practice of their faith and have recently returned to the Church. It is advisable that at least two years pass between their entry (or re-entry) into the Church and their acceptance into a formation program.
- Applicants who share that they have experienced a “sudden conversion” should be allowed to have some suitable period of time pass between the experience and their entry into a formation program.
- All applicants should have received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

Education

- The SVD prefers to recruit individuals who already possess a high school diploma or a GED (General Education Diploma).
- Students with a high school diploma or GED can be admitted to the formation program at Divine Word College.
- Under special circumstances, an applicant without a GED or high school diploma may be accepted to DWC if he meets specific criteria explained in the Admission Policies of Divine Word College.
- Candidates who already have a Bachelor Degree or higher will be considered for the Associate Program and may be placed in any SVD location that is appropriate. Candidates needing philosophy classes will generally be placed at DWC in Epworth, Iowa.

Health

- A complete physical and psychological evaluation should be completed for all candidates seeking admission.
- While some health issues are a concern for future missionary ministry, all health concerns should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Special note must be made regarding an applicant's history of mental health issues (including depression, personality disorders, schizophrenia, etc.), a history of substance abuse/chemical dependency, and other medical conditions that require daily medication and special accommodations that are not within reason.

International Candidates

- Applicants to the SVD must be in the United States with proper documentation to enter a formation program.
- Candidates who are U.S. citizens, permanent residents or in the U.S. on refugee status should have easily verifiable documents to prove such.
- Other candidates who are in the U.S. must have their status verified to confirm that they are in the U.S. with proper documentation and are permitted by the government to study for the Society.
- These situations must be reviewed with the National Vocation Director and, in collaboration with the Province's immigration coordinator, will decide if these candidates can make formal application to the SVD.

Marital Status

- Applicants whose marriages have been annulled should be carefully screened. Although these men may have the canonical freedom to pursue ordination and consecrated life, it is important to evaluate how previous obstacles to a marriage commitment or possible scandal might affect their viability as candidates.
- Men who have had a civil marriage and divorce, as well as men whose spouse has died, have the freedom to apply for a formation program.
- These applications need to be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- Men with minor children to whom they are emotionally and/or financially responsible are not considered appropriate for application to the SVD.

Ordained Priest/Professed Brother

- Some candidates expressing interest in the SVD may already be an ordained priest for a diocese or a priest or brother from another religious community. These individuals are welcomed to apply for membership to the SVD.
- These candidates must complete all necessary admission requirements of the Associate Program. Generally they will complete one or two years of formation (if accepted into the program) before applying for the novitiate.
- If an applicant has been dismissed from a formation program or from an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, no subsequent applications will be considered in the two years following the dismissal. If the departure was other than a dismissal, sufficient time should be allotted to evaluate carefully his application and background (generally at least a year).
- Applicants who are currently ordained priests or professed Brothers must submit a letter of recommendation from their bishop or community superior.

Priesthood vs. Brotherhood Candidates

- Some applicants express a desire to serve the Lord as a missionary, but are unsure if they will pursue the priesthood or brotherhood.
- Within the SVD, a final decision is not expected until the student has entered the novitiate and has begun his study of the Society and his vocation in more depth.
- Some students have a clear vision to which vocation God is calling them. Pre-novitiate Brother candidates will study at Divine Word College in Epworth.
- Vocation Directors must work with candidates to help them understand the distinction between the priesthood and brotherhood. The brotherhood is not a “stepping-stone” to the priesthood. Applicants should not be encouraged to use the brotherhood as a line of progression to the priesthood.

Other

1. Admission Approval

- The Vocation Office team recruits candidates for all levels of formation within the United States. It is their responsibility to present adequate information about each applicant to the appropriate governing body charged with the decision of accepting each applicant.

- All applicants applying for Divine Word College must be accepted by the Admissions Committee appointed by the President of Divine Word College in accordance with the policies of the College.
- Applicants over the age of 35 must get approval of the Chicago Provincial Council before beginning any formation program.
- Applicants to the Associate Program must get approval from the governing body of the location in which they will receive their formation. For example, if an Associate student will study Philosophy at DWC, the DWC Admissions Committee must accept him into the College. If he will be residing at the Theologate in Chicago, the House Council must accept him. If the student will be living in a parish, the District Superior and his council must accept the applicant.

2. Associate Program

- The SVD formation program for Associate Students is intended for individuals who already possess a bachelor degree. Candidates apply for the program and are accepted into the program as described above.
- The National Vocation Director works with the Director of the Associate Program to determine the appropriate placement for a candidate applying for the Associate Program.

Essential Information for Discerning Candidates
Divine Word College · Associate Program · Brother Formation Program

Society of the Divine Word

1. Basic History of the Society
 - Founded in 1875 by St. Arnold – Steyl, Holland
 - St. Joseph first missionary to China
 - Bro. Wendelin first SVD to USA in 1895 – Techny Motherhouse in the USA
 - Growth to over 75 countries around the world
2. Charism of the Society
 - International, multicultural community living
 - Vows – poverty, chastity & obedience
 - Spirituality & devotions
3. Various Ministries of the Priests and Brothers
 - Professional ministers...need education to prepare for ministries
 - Examples of different ministries; i.e., parish work, serving the homeless, street kids, AIDS ministry, professors at universities, seminary vocation and formation ministry, campus ministry, counseling, religious education/catechesis, media ministry, business/computer/financial service to the community, fundraising, etc.
4. What comes after Initial Formation (Divine Word College or Associate Program or Brother Formation)?
 - Novitiate
 - Theologate or Wendelin House
 - CTP
 - Vows / Ordination

Divine Word College

1. Spiritual Formation
 - Spiritual direction
 - Retreats/days of recollection
 - Daily Mass (small group...language Masses)
 - Holy Hour
 - Vespers
 - Private prayer
 - Weekly small group formation meetings
2. Ministry Formation
 - Ministry Activities (ministry with children, cultural communities, elderly, RCIA, deaf, etc.)
 - Liturgy Ministry (Eucharistic Ministers, music minister, acolyte, lector, etc.)

- Community Service – Ministry to others in the community (dishes, cleaning the house, work/study program, volunteerism, etc.)
3. Intellectual Formation
- Majors: Philosophy, Theology and Mission, Intercultural Studies, and Pre-Theology Certificate
 - Minors: Philosophy, Intercultural Studies, Theology and Mission
 - Core Curriculum Program
 - Intensive English Language Institute (IELI)
 - 125 credits to graduate (12 credits per semester for fulltime student)
 - Class schedule and class size
 - Relationship with Instructors
 - Study, reading, writing papers, tests, etc.
4. Personal Formation
- Weekly small group formation meetings
 - Community life
 - Various topics: time management, study skills, expressing emotions, drug/alcohol information, working with others, enculturation, etc.
 - Developing positive character traits; i.e., respect, honesty, patience, responsibility, etc.
 - Independent living: developing personal prayer life, developing own schedule, washing one's own laundry, setting personal goals and developing action plans to reach them, etc.
5. Cross-Cultural Formation
- Live in a multicultural, international community
 - Cultural celebrations (Mission Sunday, Lunar New Year, Josephine Bakita, Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Patrick's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., etc.)
6. Other
- A. Admission Requirements
 - Review requirements—GPA, high school diploma/GED, etc.
 - Information in Packet—recommendations, autobiography, transcripts
 - B. Cost and Financial Aid
 - \$24,725 for tuition, room & board, and fees (including transportation & personal)
 - All students are asked to pay something towards their education
 - Grants and Scholarships available
 - Give Financial Aid brochure to candidate
 - C. Transfer Credits
 - If previous college student, need transcripts and syllabus or college catalog with course description in order to evaluate potential for transfer credit
 - Advance Placement Testing...need score of 4 or 5 on tests

D. ESL Testing

- All non-native English speakers tested
- Score of tests determine what level of ESL or regular college program
- Can take test before Orientation Week—Vocation Office will pay for it!

E. Dubuque and Epworth Community (rural setting, things to do, FAN Club, etc.)

- Give realistic picture of DWC's location

F. Student Life: Dorms, Food, Rec Room, Pour House, Free Time, Facility, etc.

- Share relevant information about student life

Associate Program

- For Candidates who already have a BA Degree
- Usually a two year program (can be three semesters)
- Most will go to Divine Word College in Epworth, IA – Philosophy requirements
- SVD Theologate a possibility

Brother Formation Program

- Pre-novitiate program at Divine Word College in Epworth, IA
- Post-novitiate program at DWT in Chicago
- Need to earn BA degree and look towards higher education

Divine Word Missionaries Vocation Promoter Orientation

Professional Development Opportunities

As new vocation promoters enter vocation ministry, attending specific workshops and seminars is necessary to adequately prepare for this specialized ministry. There are many professional development opportunities. Each vocation promoter should attend some basic programs as soon as possible either before beginning vocation ministry or shortly after entering the Tri-Province Vocation Office. Thereafter, vocation promoters should attend 1-2 educational programs a year that help further develop the knowledge and skills to better serve as a vocation director to young candidates in discernment.

All members of the Tri-Province Vocation Office become members of the National Religious Vocations Conference (NRVC). NRVC offers a wide variety of professional development opportunities, including a biennial convocation. At present, NRVC offers Summer and Fall Institutes with some workshops also offered in the spring.

New members to the Tri-Province Vocation Office must attend the three following NRVC workshops early in their ministry with the office:

- Orientation Program for New Vocation Directors
- Behavioral Assessment I
- Ethical Issues in Vocation and Formation Ministry

There are many other very worthwhile programs offered by NRVC, the St. Luke's Institute and other very reputable organizations. Again, vocation promoters are expected to attend 1-2 professional development programs each year. Please visit with the National Vocation Director with questions about further educational opportunities to better prepare yourself for vocation ministry.