

April 26, 2022

For the past several years the Religious Formation Conference (RFC) and Catholic Theological Union (CTU) have cosponsored ***Together: A Collaborative for Theological Education, Formation, and Community***. The collaborative launched after a 2017 RFC Congress presentation offered by Sandra Schneiders, IHM and Mary Johnson, SNDdeN titled, "Re-Imaging Formation for Religious Life for the Future: A Sociological and Theological Analysis of Religious Life in the United States." Stressing the importance of theological study for newer women and men religious, they proposed a graduate program for recently professed that also integrates community and ongoing formation.

Together is for religious Sisters and Brothers in temporary vows and for newly professed religious (within the last 5 years). Participants enroll in one of the graduate theology programs at CTU, share community, and participate in ongoing formation together as an intercultural, inter-congregational, and intergenerational cohort. The program begins in late August and concludes in late May each year.

Our newest members are an integral part of the evolution of religious life. They need a strong theological background, ministerial preparation, and grounding in the charism and mission of their institute in order to be future leaders. We believe this innovative program embodies the very best of what it means to be women and men religious who attend to the Good News of justice, peace, and love in our world.

Since its inception, *Together* has grown steadily and currently has five young women religious participants. In the fall of 2022, a sixth sister will join this wonderfully diverse community. In May of 2023, three of these sisters will graduate from their programs of study at CTU. Thus, this is the perfect time for your Congregation to consider having one of your newer members participate in the program.

We invite you to participate in *Together* through prayerful support as well as through the encouragement of new members to be a part of the next cohort.

The current location of the community is about a 15-minute walk to CTU. This residence is a 4000-square foot apartment, with six bedrooms, three baths, two sunrooms, a laundry room, and a large living and dining room.

This fall, the *Together* program begins its fifth year. While a grant has covered much of the expenditures at its outset (guest speaker stipends, the salary of a part-time Coordinator, etc.), it's now necessary to charge a program fee, beginning in the fall of 2022. The fee per year is \$1,000 USD per participant (\$500/semester).

Tuition, room and board, and the program fee are paid by each participant. Tuition at CTU is currently \$940 per credit hour, the cost of rent is approximately \$850 per month, and food and household expenses are around \$350 per month. Both RFC and CTU offer some need-based scholarship assistance, and those in religious communities receive discounted tuition.

While there are many program offerings at CTU, we encourage participants to enroll in one of the master's degree programs. For descriptions of each program, please see www.ctu.edu/academics. Participants will be guided to choose the best program to meet their ministerial interests and one that is aligned with their community charism.

Although applications to enroll in CTU and participate in the program are due by June 1, the earlier one applies and is accepted the greater likelihood one is able access financial assistance.

To learn more about the goals and outcomes of the program and to inquire further about the application process, please visit www.together-formation.com. As the *Together* Program Coordinator, I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Please see my email address below. I'd love to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Maribeth Howell, OP
Together Program Coordinator
Email: mhowell@relforcon.org