

The Associated Colleges of Illinois

A History 1952-2012

Introduction



Distinguished History, Bright Future

Our story begins in 1952, when a group of civic-minded business and community leaders came together with college presidents to establish the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) – an organization dedicated to strengthening the state's critical network of private liberal arts colleges by tapping new sources of support for independent higher education.

Over the next six decades, guided by a series of talented leaders, ACI built lasting partnerships between institutions of higher education and businesses, foundations, youth-serving organizations, and other not-for-profit organizations. These efforts paid off. Over time, ACI proved to be among the most resilient of thirty-two state funds organized to support independent higher education around the country, and it has emerged as one the most successful in tackling those educational and social problems that private higher education can effectively address.

Since 1996, when the Associated Colleges of Illinois first launched its College Readiness Program (now, ACI's College Readiness and Completion Initiative), ACI and its member colleges have designed and implemented working solutions to help more low-income, minority, and first generation students graduate high school and successfully complete degrees at ACI institutions; to improve teaching and learning in Illinois' high-need K-12 schools; to boost career

preparedness among liberal arts students and expand the career development services member institutions can provide; and to support ACI colleges and universities in their efforts to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of independent higher education. Each of these initiatives has attracted new resources to support Illinois' network of private colleges and universities; each has helped enhance the reputation of ACI member colleges and universities; and each has produced consistent, positive results that position ACI member institutions as effective problem-solvers; and all have improved student experiences and student outcomes.

The Associated Colleges of Illinois: A History – 1952-2012 tracks ACI's development along a sixty year trajectory from collaborative fundraising to collaborative problem-solving. When the first edition was completed, ACI stood on the cusp of explosive program growth, fueled in large part by a series of federal and state grants awarded from 2002 onward. By 2012, at the time of its sixtieth anniversary, ACI was an accomplished program developer and grant administrator, with stable relationships with dozens of private foundations and corporate funders and with a sophisticated understanding of how to capture and put to good use large public and private grants in order to advance its goals and those of its member institutions.

At this writing, the Associated Colleges of Illinois remains strong, resilient, and energetic – and still committed to the distinctive brand of higher education represented by Illinois' independent colleges and universities. We appreciate the opportunity to share our reflections on the events and accomplishments of our first sixty years, and – the assistance of our many generous donors – we look forward to continuing our mission on behalf of ACI member institutions and the students they serve.



Allan Cave
Chairman



Robert Gervasi
President



Jerry Fuller
Executive Director

***Creating opportunities
by building on strength.***

1952-2012



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Colleges of Illinois

Established 1952

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