

ACI's Project LEAD Summit explores teacher diversity and support

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Lisa Cooper, center, State Farm, was chair for the Project LEAD Summit, held in Chicago this fall.

Fifty faculty and teacher education candidates from ACI's [23 member colleges and universities](#) took part in the inaugural Project LEAD (Leaders in Education Advocating for Diversity) Summit in Chicago Sept. 25. The summit was organized by [ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools](#).

The summit provided research on the shifting demographics of student and teacher populations in Illinois and the nation. It explored ways to diversify the pool of teacher candidates, and to increase and support diverse candidates. A recent [report](#) by the Albert Shanker Institute suggests there is evidence that “all students ... would benefit from a teaching force that reflects the full diversity of the U.S. population.”

Summit panelists discussed state and national perspectives of key issues affecting teacher workforce diversity, according to an [AACTE report](#). Diverse education leaders from Chicago, Joliet and Waukegan shared personal stories highlighting successes and challenges they experienced with student ambassadors, as well as advice for the ambassadors to grow as education leaders themselves.

As a follow up to the Summit, Project LEAD student and faculty ambassadors will design action plans to improve candidate recruitment, retention, and support on their own campuses. National attention has been focused on the work of ACI institutions and Project LEAD. A Nov. 17 webinar featured their work and that of the Network Improvement Community.

The Chicago event was sponsored by [State Farm](#) and hosted by [Fifth Third Bank](#). Attendees included staff with AACTE and the [Illinois Education Research Council](#). Project LEAD is one of six initiatives undertaken by the Center for Success.