

ACI 65th Anniversary Reception Focuses on Scholars, Independent Higher Education May 2, 2017

More than 200 people representing Illinois higher education, corporations and foundations, plus several individual supporters, attended the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) 65th Anniversary Benefit Reception April 21.

The event at the University Club of Chicago was a celebration of independent, private higher education in Illinois while generating financial support for ACI's scholarship program, and its Peer Mentoring Program, now available at seven ACI member campuses. Both programs support underserved students at ACI's 24 member colleges and universities.



More than 200 people attended the ACI 65th Anniversary Benefit Reception April 21 at the University Club of Chicago.

“I strongly believe the best way we can make incremental improvement in our communities is by making a high-quality, liberal arts education accessible and affordable to first-generation, minority and low-income students,” said James S. Wylie, chair, ACI Board of Trustees, in his remarks. “What we’re doing is to help build the critical resources needed to make our mission a reality for the nearly 60,000 students at our member colleges.”



ACI President Barbara A. Farley

Dr. Barbara A. Farley, president of Illinois College, Jacksonville, and ACI president, expressed appreciation on behalf of ACI's member presidents and institutions. “I would like to thank you for your enduring support for the students attending and graduating from our colleges and universities. These students need your support more than ever, so they can go on to do great things in their professional careers, their personal lives, their communities and the world,” she said.

CIC president comments on three dimensions of higher education

Dr., Richard Ekman, president of The Council of Independent Colleges, Washington, said in his keynote remarks that supporting private higher education is critical for America's future and society's needs. He commented on independent higher education access, success and affordability.



CIC President Richard Ekman

On access, he said a higher percentage of low-income first-generation students attend private versus public colleges. “We are in the private college sector, the places of opportunity, the places where people get a chance to make it and begin their path to upward mobility,” Ekman said. On success, he commented that graduation rates in private colleges are better than graduation rates in other higher education sectors. Private college graduates are active in their communities, vote regularly and give generously, he said.

Finally, he said private colleges are more affordable than many people believe. “The reason why it’s entirely affordable is because of the commitment of our colleges and universities and people like you in this room,” Ekman said. “Scholarships ... make it possible for our students to succeed.”

Sponsors of the ACI 65th Anniversary Reception were Aon, Arthur J. Gallagher & Co., and UPS.

Founded in 1952, ACI consisted of 22 charter member schools, many of whom are still affiliated with the organization. Since then, it has awarded more than \$70 million in scholarships to Illinois students, with the help of corporations, foundations and individuals donors. Today, it serves nearly 60,000 students in 24 Illinois colleges and universities



Chicago Sinfonietta's Project Inclusion Ensemble performed at the ACI Benefit Reception.