

## ACI Benefit Reception testimonials emphasize opportunity for underserved students May 2, 2017

Educators, students and supporters offered heartfelt testimonies to supporters attending ACI's 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Benefit Reception. They called attention to ACI's scholarship and peer mentoring programs, aimed at underserved students at ACI's 24 member colleges and universities.

Education is a "noble mission" made "more noble" when extended to students who don't have the opportunity to attend college, said Dr. David L. Parkyn, president of North Park University, Chicago. Parkyn said his own family was not part of those who sent students to college, yet he was the first in his family to attend college and graduate, with significant help from mentors and instructors.



*President David L. Parkyn, North Park University, Chicago, was the first in his family to attend college.*

"ACI and its member institutions are committed to serving this important student population," Parkyn said. "We as ACI own an obligation. We claim a moral responsibility to open wide the doors to higher education, the doors that were closed to my family, and that too often remain closed for so many students and families across our nation."



*KhayLeen Wright, Dominican University, River Forest, joined the ACI Peer Mentoring Program at Dominican as a mentee, and now is a mentor to first-generation students entering the university.*

KhayLeen Wright, a mentor and leader in ACI's Peer Mentoring Program at Dominican University, River Forest, joined as a mentee in her freshman year. That experience had a significant impact for her. "Entering into college was a huge source of anxiety for me as I had no idea how college was supposed to look or feel," she told the attendees. Now a junior majoring in English, she is mentoring incoming students. "I have found great value in making connections with students walking in my shoes. This is a program that I hope continues to be funded," she said.

Terri Diggs Norman of AT&T, a corporate ACI Board of Trustees member, said she and her husband, Art, veteran news anchor and reporter at WMAQ-TV, Chicago, are both first-generation college students. The Normans are excited about ACI's efforts to increase college graduates, she said. "We need graduates. We need a generation that doesn't come up to a podium and say 'we were the first in our family.' That should be a thing of the past," she said.

"I want to thank this organization for opening many doors," said Art Norman. "Dr. King said it many times: 'It's not where you come from. It's where you're going.'" He noted that any student can succeed in college, regardless of background or experience. "We want to mentor them every chance we get," he said. "You are a part of a solution."

To provide financial support for ACI scholarship and peer mentoring programs, please visit <http://acifund.org/giving/> or contact Mick Weltman, ACI executive director by phone at 312-263-2391, ext. 0523, or email at [mweltman@acifund.org](mailto:mweltman@acifund.org).