



Associated Colleges of Illinois

Illinois College Presidents Connect Liberal Arts Education and Workforce Success

January 20, 2017



North Park University President David L. Parkyn and Dominican University President Donna M. Carroll presented to the City Club of Chicago January 19.

Presidents of two [member universities](#) of Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) presented a compelling case for liberal arts education, connecting the student experience at their institutions with preparation for the state's workforce, engagement as citizens and successful living.

President Donna M. Carroll of [Dominican University](#), River Forest, and President David L. Parkyn of [North Park University](#), Chicago, spoke to an audience of more than 230 people January 19 at the City Club of Chicago. The presidents' presentation, "Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities: A Hidden Resource for Chicago and Illinois," can be viewed [online](#). The program was cosponsored by the ACI and the City Club of Chicago.

"I consider it (liberal arts) as a high impact, adaptable and often misunderstood sector," Carroll said. She noted about half of the 3,700 student body at Dominican are first-generation college students. She also said that students at Dominican get an education that is "highly personal and relatively low cost."

"Our principal responsibility is simply to walk alongside our students ... because learning at liberal arts colleges is deeply relational," Parkyn said. "An education at a liberal arts college broadens the mind." The 3,200 member student body at North Park reflects the "diversity of America," he said, the result of a commitment of the university's board of trustees.

On workforce development, Carroll argued that "a liberal arts education prepares you with the flexibility and the resilience, the critical thinking, the good judgment, and communication skills that prepare you for the job we don't know yet exists. And that makes us tremendously proud."

"Through the educational experiences on campus like ours, students are connected with the community around them (and) businesses around them, through internships and civic engagement," Parkyn said. He asked audience members to help keep students in the state for college because they tend to stay in the same geographic area after graduation.

Both presidents are graduates of liberal arts colleges – Carroll majored in 18th Century English Literature at Wellesley College, and Parkyn was a history major at Messiah College. Parkyn was also the first in his family to attend college. Carroll is one of the state's longest serving college presidents, now in her 23rd year at Dominican University.