

ACI expands Peer Mentoring Program to nine colleges

June 30, 2017



[Millikin University](#), Decatur, and [Rockford University](#), Rockford, will join ACI's [Peer Mentoring Program](#) beginning with the 2017-18 academic year. The addition of these two institutions brings the total number of Peer Mentoring Program campuses to nine, including Augustana College, Rock Island; Blackburn College, Carlinville; Concordia University Chicago, River Forest; Dominican University, River Forest; Monmouth College, Monmouth; North Park University, Chicago; and Quincy University, Quincy.

ACI's Peer Mentoring Program matches first-generation college freshmen from low-income and/or minority backgrounds with trained peer mentors – usually upperclass students — from similar backgrounds. Studies show that “high-touch” peer mentoring, together with other retention-focused interventions, helps students remain in school and increases graduation rates among underserved students.

In 2017-18, ACI's Peer Mentoring Program will serve a total of 132 students, including 22 mentors and 110 mentees. Students are organized into teams of one mentor to every five mentees, and each participating campus hosts at least two teams and may host as many as five teams. Mentors are required to develop a “success action plan” with each mentee and to maintain regular contact with them through in-person consultations, phone calls, texts and email. The goal is to help mentees navigate the challenges of freshman year by learning how to access and use campus resources that support their success and by developing productive relationships with peers, faculty and administrators.

A \$30,000 First Opportunity Partners grant from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), with support from the UPS Foundation, was awarded to ACI this spring. The grant to expand and enhance ACI's Expanded and Enhanced Peer Mentoring Program was awarded conditional on ACI raising matching funds. To secure the grant, ACI raised \$50,000 in pledges and gifts designated to peer mentoring by March 31 through fundraising associated with ACI's Annual Benefit Reception.

“We are grateful to our corporate, foundation and individual supporters who helped us achieve this important step,” said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. “The Peer Mentoring Program is a significant piece of our outreach efforts with members and first-generation students. We're looking forward to expanding this program in the years to come.”