



Fall 2016

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From the Executive Director

Dear ACI Friends,
Welcome to the Fall issue of *ACI Reporter*.

The first three months of our fiscal year (June - August, 2016) were very productive, and the next quarter looks even more exciting.

As I shared in the last issue of the *ACI Reporter*, during the past quarter we hoped to raise more scholarship funds, expand our Peer Mentoring Program to seven ACI members, grow our conference programming to five conference types (a total of nine conferences), and expand our media presence to better advocate for liberal-arts education and our member colleges and universities. I'm pleased to say that we've accomplished all of these with even more aggressive plans for fall.

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During the past quarter we added three new corporate trustees and will be adding three to six more in the fall. Our ultimate goal is to have 44 corporate trustees representing small, medium and large, successful businesses.

We've started planning our April 21, 2017 reception/fundraiser. We're excited to hold our first program at the City Club of Chicago luncheon October 12, focused on the liberal arts, and we will begin our three-year (2017-2019) strategic planning process shortly.

Thanks for your continued support this past year, and we look forward to a very dynamic and exciting fall.



Mick Weltman
Executive Director

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ACI Scholars

Denzel Johnson Monmouth College



It's a long way from the Chicago's Auburn-Gresham neighborhood to Monmouth, Illinois. Denzel Johnson's journey has led him to [Monmouth College](#), where he is thriving. As he enters his sophomore year, Johnson's life is one of varied interests, with his sights set on a career in communication, perhaps as a news anchor or a public relations professional.

In Chicago, he has taken advantage of networking opportunities to learn about his chosen field. For example, a mentor in Chicago, David Ransburg, introduced him to Terrell Brown, a Chicago TV anchor, who shared some career advice about the competitive nature of the TV business. In turn, Brown introduced Johnson to UB Rodriguez, a Chicago radio personality.

A graduate of Muchin College Prep in Chicago, Johnson dreamed of attending the University of Missouri, known for its outstanding journalism school and for alumni who have become stars in the business. But the cost was too high for Johnson and his mother, and Monmouth College became a possibility. What helped his decision was the opportunity to learn from Joseph Angotti. Angotti was executive producer of NBC Nightly News and senior vice president of NBC News before he began an academic career that led him to Monmouth College, where he now teaches and directs student publications. Johnson is a student in Angotti's class this semester.

Johnson finances his education with loans and help from his mother, Sarah, a retired University of Illinois-Chicago librarian. A \$2,675 UPS scholarship, provided by ACI though Monmouth, helped ease the financial burden for Johnson's mother, who helps pay tuition bills. Johnson's father, Brian, died a few years ago. "The scholarship made her payments a little smaller. I'm still looking for scholarships and grants to help in any way I possibly can. It definitely took a burden off of her, and helped keep me in school," he said. Johnson describes his mother as "a rock," who gave him a passion for learning and admiration for librarians who can open a world of new possibilities.

At Monmouth, Johnson hosts a music show, "The Power Hour," on the campus radio station. He joined the Black Student Union and Sigma Phi Epsilon, a fraternity that emphasizes balance in life and work, and community service. This year, he returned early for the fall semester at

Monmouth to prepare for a new role as a resident advisor. Other than communication, his academic interests include topics such as psychology and business, one of which may become his academic minor.

"Monmouth was the best place for me to attend college," Johnson said. "They really cared about me and my education, and made it affordable enough so that I could reach the dreams I wanted to reach. That's the reason I chose Monmouth College."

Johnson has supplemented his education with a variety of jobs that taught him some useful communication skills, too. He has worked at Bank of America in customer service, worked at Skadden, Arps law firm in Chicago in human resources and accounting, and worked at an information services desk for the City of Monmouth.

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Hannah Grimmer

Principia College

After Hannah Grimmer's first year at [Principia College](#) Elsah, she was accepted into Principia's abroad program, which allows students to take classes and experience the cultures of nations in which they study.

Grimmer, of Santa Rosa, California, is majoring in both mass communication and art. She will take classes in majors as well as philosophy, while visiting Athens and several Greek islands and parts of Italy for more than two months. "Because it is an art and mass communication abroad experience, we are bringing along art supplies. We're going to be painting, journaling, doing photography – and I'm bringing four cameras with me. I'm excited that I will be able to use all that I've learned in my freshman year," she says. Grimmer hopes the abroad experience will help her figure a career path. For now, that seems focused on photography or advertising.



Helping to make her overseas experience possible is a \$4,500 A. Montgomery Ward Scholarship from ACI through Principia. "That scholarship I got from ACI is amazing," Grimmer said. "It is making it possible for me to travel and do things that I'm really passionate about. I'm very, very thankful," she said.

Grimmer learned about Principia through her Christian Science background and decided to go. She spent her senior year at Principia's Upper School in St. Louis for high-school students. As part of her high-school experience, Grimmer spent a week in France. After high school, she moved across the Mississippi River to the scenic Elsah campus to attend Principia College, an institution of about 500 students.

Immediately, she realized the benefits of a small liberal arts college: Small classes. Close friends. Meaningful teacher-student relationships. "The dedication the professors put into their jobs is truly inspiring," Grimmer said. "For a college student, seeing how passionate someone is towards their teaching career helps me work toward a similar future."

Grimmer has taken advantage of other opportunities at Principia College. She plans events for students in her dormitory. She uses her photography skills to document campus events for the college. She works at a campus restaurant, and plays intramural basketball. At the beginning of the fall semester, Grimmer helped orient new students to college life and get them moved in. These were long days, she said, but important to a student who is invested in her college experience at Principia.

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Timothy Yurs

Monmouth College



Baseball is what brought Timothy Yurs to [Monmouth College](#). The senior from Neoga, Illinois, always enjoyed playing baseball and basketball in high school. A call from an assistant coach at Monmouth and a campus visit convinced Yurs that Monmouth was the place to be. "It felt like home," he says.

Yurs has played second base for Monmouth's Fighting Scots, but he was behind two all-conference players at that position, so his playing time was limited. Still, Yurs has made the most of his time as a Monmouth College baseball player. His work ethic earned him a coveted spot on the team's Florida roster two years in a row, enabling him to travel with the squad during spring break to play other college teams in sunny Florida early in the season.

Baseball led Yurs to Monmouth, but it is his desire to become a teacher – arising from his interest in sports -- that drives him now. Yurs decided to concentrate his time on his kinesiology and is working to gain certification to teach K-12 physical education classes. "I knew the education side of it would take me further than baseball. It was a tough decision to leave the team, but I knew it was a decision that had to be made long-term," he says.

For his academic work, Monmouth awarded Yurs a \$1,500 ACI general scholarship. The award was timely and needed. His father was out of work briefly in late 2015. The college worked with his Dad to adjust tuition payments for Yurs' education, he says. The ACI scholarship filled the gap.

"I really appreciated it. My Dad appreciated it. It was nice for me personally because it said I was doing things right academically because the scholarship was for students struggling financially but doing well academically. It encouraged me to keep working hard in school," Yurs said.

While at Monmouth, Yurs has gained an appreciation for other subjects, which he says is one of the benefits of attending a liberal arts college. For example, he took an art elective in technical theater, which required participation in a live play. Yurs joined the lighting crew for the production, running spotlights, something he thoroughly enjoyed. In addition, Yurs says he gained an appreciation for history and helped out at a "classics day" recently. Experiences like these have helped him develop relationships with professors. "It's a really good environment to be in. The class sizes are so small that each professor gets to know you personally," Yurs says.

This fall, Yurs began his senior year, intent on graduating in May 2017. Last spring he began his student-teaching experience with students in kindergarten through second grade, and this fall, he will teach students in middle school and high school.

Yurs stays connected to his sports interests, helping to coach a fifth-grade basketball team in the Monmouth area, plus he helps out with the college baseball and football teams. This past summer, he played on two slow-pitch softball teams, and worked at Meadowview Golf Course in Mattoon, doing maintenance and other course beautification chores.

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Meet ACI Members

Innovation, Opportunity Keys for Future Success at Rockford University

[**Rockford University**](#), an institution with a long history, will mark its 170th year in 2017. It will look back on its unusual beginning in 1847 as Rockford Female Seminary which prepared young women for Christian service, and it will celebrate what it has become: an institution committed to liberal arts education, with innovative programs to educate teachers and provide educational opportunities to graduates of Rockford public schools. It also has a prominent academic program in the performing arts, for both performance and technical learning.



This summer, [Dr. Eric W. Fulcomer](#), left, became Rockford's 18th president. Fulcomer is a veteran of higher education and most recently, was vice president for enrollment management at Rockford. He moved into his new role after working with and learning from Dr. Robert L. Head, who retired this past summer after serving eight years as Rockford's president. Fulcomer's career also included multiple roles at Bluffton University in Ohio and a two-year stint as mayor of the Village of Bluffton before joining Rockford.

'Education Pathway' aimed at teacher recruitment, preparation

Innovation at Rockford University includes Education Pathway, a joint project with Rockford Public School District 205. Education Pathway focuses on recruiting teachers for the district, says Fulcomer. "One of their goals is to get more male and minority teachers to teach in the district, and they've discovered the best way to do that was to grow their own," he says. Through Education Pathway, the district identifies students working toward becoming teachers, and helps them begin preparing in their high school years. When they reach their senior year, Rockford University offers dual-enrollment courses for these students, who earn college credit and credit toward high school graduation. After high school, Rockford University has agreed to enroll up to 20 of these students per year in its education curriculum at a greatly reduced cost, Fulcomer explains. There are benefits across the board: The university increases its local student population, and the school district agrees to help these students by providing opportunities for internships and summer jobs. Successful program graduates are offered teaching jobs in the Rockford school district. Further, within six months, the new teachers are able to start a master's degree program in urban education, a new offering at Rockford University – with their studies paid for by the school district, Fulcomer says.

"I think it's a very exciting program," Fulcomer says. "This will be a great opportunity to attend Rockford University, with a guaranteed job after graduation, assuming they meet the requirements, and a route to a master's degree. I'm not aware of anybody doing something like this." Already, the university is talking about similar programs in other disciplines, although it may be more difficult to identify students while they are in middle school or high school, Fulcomer adds. In addition, the university assists the local public school system through Alignment Rockford, which, among other things, provides volunteers who lead reading and math tutoring programs, assists with academy programs in high schools and helps high school sophomores visit college campuses.

College degree opportunities through 'Rockford Promise'

Rockford Promise, similar to the "Kalamazoo Promise," identifies and helps students attend college free of tuition costs. "This past year, Rockford University and Rock Valley College agreed to take two students per year through the Rockford Promise," Fulcomer says. Eventually, Rockford University hopes to have up to eight students working toward college degrees, at no cost to the students.

Innovative programs like these are related to "Transform Rockford," an effort by community leaders to transform the North-Central Illinois city to a "Top 25 City" by 2025. "We want to be a community to be emulated. All of these things that are happening are examples of things we're doing in education to transform our city," Fulcomer says.



University earns invitation to 'Fringe Festival' in Scotland

Rockford University has made its mark in a variety of academic programs and keeps liberal arts front-and-center. "We have our heritage as a liberal arts institution. We are committed to making sure that every single student is educated in the liberal arts," Fulcomer says. Rockford University is known for academic programs in business, education, nursing – its largest undergraduate program – and performing arts, which attracts students from throughout the United States and beyond. This year, it gained international attention when 21 university students performed in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, where the Rockford students performed in dance, singing and musical theater programs.

"The Fringe is the largest arts festival in the world, and our students were invited to participate. It's an invitation-only event," Fulcomer says. In fact, only four small U.S. colleges earned invitations to this year's event, held every year in Scotland's capital.

Rockford University, with about 1,300 students in undergraduate and master's degree programs, expects to have record undergraduate and MBA enrollments this academic year. With new master's degrees in urban education and bilingual ESL, the university offers some 80 majors, minors and programs. Rockford's multicultural student body has also grown. In the past academic year, 23 countries were represented on the campus and at least 80 enrollees were international students. "We want to continue to work to be the 'University of Choice' for students," says Fulcomer, adding that the university also wants to be the "Employer of Choice" for faculty and staff, too.



Rockford University is home to the Jane Addams International Peace Garden, named for Rockford alumna and Nobel Laureate Jane Addams.

The university is in the midst of a \$17.3 fundraising campaign – of which more than \$12 million has been pledged or given -- to enhance academic programs, provide funds for student learning opportunities, and continue to modernize buildings and other facilities. It was also one of four Illinois colleges to secure a competitive Library of Congress grant to train teachers to use digitized resources effectively.

Rockford University and ACI

Rockford's connection to ACI is vital, says the president, noting that ACI provides forums for professional development for university staff, as well as raising funds to serve first-generation, low-income and minority students. In this fiscal year, 11 Rockford students will share \$18,900 in ACI scholarships funds.

Fulcomer, who has been involved in student retention work for 23 years, is especially interested in students ACI serves. "I was a first-generation student myself – the first in my family to go to college. I didn't really understand the whole process, but somehow, I managed to make it through. I have a special place in my heart for first-generation college students."

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Featured ACI Program

ACI Peer Mentoring Program Recruiting at Seven Campuses



ACI's seven [Peer Mentoring Program](#) campuses soon will complete the recruitment phase of the 2016-17 program. Each campus will recruit one or more cohorts of freshmen mentees together with peer mentors (one for every five mentees) who will guide those freshmen through their critical first year of college. All mentees and mentors will be low-income students, and most will be first-generation degree seekers and/or minority students. The demographics of Peer Mentoring Program cohorts will likely vary with the populations of the host campuses. For example, cohorts at colleges in more rural areas are likely to include more rural students, while cohorts at campuses in urban areas will likely include more urban minority students. Each host campus is free to design their own recruitment strategy. One campus will target students who have gained provisional acceptance to their institution; others are selecting mentees from among students flagged by their admission departments as arriving on campus with risk factors that could inhibit their college success.

In total, ACI's 2016-17 Peer Mentoring Program will serve 160 students, including 130 mentees and 30 mentors across seven member campuses, including [Augustana College](#), Rock Island, [Dominican University](#), River Forest, and [North Park University](#), Chicago, with new cohorts established this year at [Blackburn College](#), Carlinville, [Concordia University Chicago](#), River Forest, [Monmouth College](#), Monmouth, and [Quincy University](#), Quincy. This year's program also will convene campus coordinators for their first in-person conference on October 21 as part of ACI's Student Engagement Conference. Campus coordinators will share their experiences with the program and begin developing training sessions and materials to support future Peer Mentoring cohorts.

ACI's Peer Mentoring Program seeks to increase the number of minority, low-income and first-generation college students who succeed at college. By building a "relationship bridge" between mentees, mentors and the campus community and its support services, ACI's program provides an early warning system that can anticipate and address the particular challenges these students face before those challenges derail students' college career.

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Did You Know?

ACI to Distribute UPS Scholarship Funds to Illinois Students

[The UPS Educational Endowment Fund](#) awarded \$57,200 to Associated Colleges of Illinois for scholarships for low-income students at ACI's [22 member colleges and universities](#). The scholarships are made possible by a grant from the UPS Educational Endowment Fund, administered by the [Council of Independent Colleges](#) (CIC), Washington, D.C. ACI will distribute the UPS funds during its 2016 fiscal year.



of CIC.

Nationally, CIC and the UPS Foundation teamed up to provide nearly \$1.5 million in student scholarships this year, distributed through associations representing [independent colleges and universities](#) in 32 states, including ACI.

"These funds are critically important for the students we serve because we know many students need these dollars to remain in college," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "We are grateful for the work of the UPS Endowment Fund to make these funds available."

"Helping to make college affordable for students from underserved populations is a truly critical need in our society, and it is rewarding to know that The UPS Foundation is addressing this important issue head-on," said Richard Ekman, president

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ACI News

Just Announced: ACI Named Scholarships



Do you want to help shape young lives, improve the Illinois workforce and honor an individual, organization or business? Consider establishing an ACI Named Scholarship! These scholarships can make a significant difference for student recipients while providing valuable recognition for the individual or entity for which the scholarship is named.

ACI Named Scholarships provide funders with opportunities to invest in Illinois' future college-educated workforce. These scholarships honor or memorialize individuals, businesses or organizations – and they often advance the goals of their namesakes by targeting funds to a specific population, course of study or

career path.

ACI Named Scholarships provide flexible options for funders. To get started, contact Mick Weltman, ACI executive director, mweltman@acifund.org or (312) 263-2391 ext. 0523.

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ACI Fall Professional Development Conferences in October and November

Associated Colleges of Illinois has set dates for four fall conferences that support administrators, faculty and staff at its 22 member Illinois colleges and universities.

The conferences, aimed at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of liberal arts higher education in the state, will be held in October and November at member colleges and universities:

October 17, [Advancement Conference](#), Principia College, Elsah -- The conference brings together advancement and fundraising professionals from ACI member institutions.

October 21, [Student Engagement Seminar](#), Dominican University, River Forest -- This conference brings together ACI faculty and staff who work with low-income, minority and first-generation students at ACI member colleges and universities. Attendees are deans of students, financial aid officers, career services professionals, multicultural officers and others. The conference also marks the first group meeting of campus coordinators of ACI's Peer Mentoring Program, who will convene for a two-hour professional development session.



November 4, [Public Relations and Marketing Conference](#), Quincy University, Quincy -- This conference is open to communicators from ACI member institutions. This is the first meeting of this group.

November 14, [Chief Financial Officers Conference](#), Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais -- This conference is open to senior-level and chief financial officers of ACI member institutions.

ACI Professional Development Conferences are open only to professionals employed by ACI member institutions.

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ACI Builds Strategic Partnership with The Back Office Cooperative

Associated Colleges of Illinois is excited to announce its new strategic partnership with [The Back Office Cooperative](#) (BOC), which will offer ACI members numerous administrative cost reduction solutions.



BOC increases buying power, delivers expert expense management services, and provides an environment for sharing best practices to free up cash for scholarships, special projects, services and more. Through this BOC partnership, it is hoped that members will identify meaningful savings (similar organizations average savings of 20 to 25 percent per member).

Managed by cost reduction industry specialists from [Expense Reduction Analysts](#), BOC will ensure quality of services from suppliers and make sure members have access to preferred suppliers at the most competitive industry pricing.

In addition to BOC group purchasing plans, the partnership will provide ACI members with a complimentary expense analysis and cost reduction project planning during the next two months. Linda Zager, BOC executive director, will contact each ACI member during October and November to set an initial meeting. She can be contacted at Linda.Zager@thebackofficecoop.org or call 312-949-5690.

We're pleased to offer another tool to help support ACI members.

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ACI Welcomes Three New Board of Trustees Members

Three new members of the Associated Colleges of Illinois Board of Trustees were recently approved by the organization's Executive Committee. The new members are [Frank Cella](#), left, managing director, Marsh; [Shaelyn Otikor](#), center, vice president and relationship manager, Global Fund Services segment, Northern Trust, Chicago; and [Kayla Portwood](#), university relations recruiter, Growmark, Inc., Bloomington, Illinois.



"We are excited about this development, and we are confident that each will contribute significantly to our work in support of deserving students and liberal arts education," said Mick Weltman ACI executive director.

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Remembering Deborah M. Sawyer, ACI Corporate Trustee

Deborah M. Sawyer, an ACI Corporate Trustee, environmental scientist and executive, passed away August 7 after battling cancer. Sawyer was best known as founder and CEO of Environmental Design Inc., Chicago, where she worked for 25 years. She was also a promoter of STEM education for minorities and women.

Sawyer joined the ACI Board of Trustees earlier this year. "We extend our deepest sympathies to Deborah's family," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "Despite her illness, Deborah actively supported ACI and brought to the board great enthusiasm for our mission to help first-generation, minority and low-income students succeed in college. We will miss her."

Information about Sawyer's life and career is available on the Environmental Design [website](#).



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Save the Date: April 21, 2017



ACI's annual fundraising reception is set for Friday, April 21, 2017, at the [University Club of Chicago](#). We want to continue our momentum by focusing attention on building our [Peer Mentoring Program](#). This year, there are seven member colleges and universities with these programs.

We have confirmed [Richard Ekman](#), president of the Council of Independent Colleges, Washington, D.C., as our speaker. Chicago Sinfonietta's Project Inclusion Ensemble will perform. You'll meet student scholars and peer mentors from some of our members, and meet the leaders and staff of ACI. Earlier the same day, presidents of member colleges and universities will meet, followed by the annual ACI Board of Trustees meeting.

We hope you will make plans to join us April 21, 2017, for ACI's fundraising reception!

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Give a Gift, Make a Difference

You can make a difference for students pursuing a private liberal arts education by making a personal gift to ACI. Your contribution will help provide scholarships for motivated low-income and first-generation students from diverse backgrounds attending ACI colleges and universities.

Your gift to ACI will go directly to students at our 22 colleges and universities who have the greatest financial need. Your financial support will strengthen their ability to stay in college and graduate.

To make your gift today, please visit our [website](#) or contact Mick Weltman at (312) 263-2391 or at mweltman@acifund.org. Your gift will go a long way in helping underserved students succeed in college and in life. Thank you!

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*Augustana College - Benedictine University - Blackburn College - Concordia University Chicago
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Knox College - Lewis University - McKendree University - Millikin University - Monmouth College
North Central College - North Park University - Olivet Nazarene University - Principia College
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