

ACI's Benefit Reception Raises Record Funds to Support Underserved Students

April 24, 2019



Thanks to generous sponsors, donors and attendees, [Associated Colleges of Illinois' 2019 Benefit Reception](#) broke previous fundraising and attendance records. The April 12 event at the University Club of Chicago raised more than \$110,000 in gross receipts, with 179 attendees, outpacing the past three ACI fundraising events.

Leading Benefit Reception sponsors were [Gallagher](#) and [Husch Blackwell](#), both patron-level sponsors. Partner-level sponsors were Aon, Baker Tilly, Don Campbell, Rathje Woodward LLC and Robbin Schwartz. "We are deeply grateful to all who supported our annual fundraiser and ACI's [27 member colleges and universities](#)," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "Proceeds from the Benefit Reception support ACI's [scholarships](#), [peer mentoring](#) on 11 member campuses and [career development programs](#)." Financial gifts, made [online](#) or check through May 31, can also be credited to the 2019 Benefit Reception, Weltman added.

Student speakers credit ACI for supporting their college experience

Stories told by student speakers highlighted the evening program. [Jordan Bruster](#), Corpus Christi, Texas, a senior in musical theater at [Rockford University](#), Rockford, said, "I needed an ACI scholarship because my family is not very well off, and Rockford University was the best choice for me. I believe that we would not be able to go to college or pursue a degree and our dreams if it weren't for programs like ACI."



Jordan Bruster, left, Jorge Palacios, center, and TaCoya Harris spoke to Benefit Reception attendees about ACI and their college experiences.

[TaCoya Harris](#), from Peoria, a freshman in the ACI Peer Mentoring Program at [North Central College](#), Naperville, said she has benefited from being a

mentee. "What's the point of giving disadvantaged youth the opportunity to go to college if they aren't given the guidance they need when they get there?" asked Harris, a computer science major. "Programs like the ACI Peer Mentoring Program ensure that students like me not only complete our degrees but that we're actually thriving and enjoying our time in college."

[Jorge Palacios](#), Berwyn, is a senior in business management at [Concordia University Chicago](#). As a mentor in the ACI Peer Mentoring Program at Concordia, Palacios said he is grateful for the opportunity to help teach a new generation of students. "I'm always going to be here for them, and the people in this amazing program are always going to be there for them and support them," he said. "Being a mentor for the ACI program has created the best way to end my college career."

Treasurer Frerichs focuses on college education and benefits for Illinois economy



The evening's featured speaker, Illinois State Treasurer [Michael W. Frerichs](#), told his own story of being a first-generation student at Yale University. Now, as treasurer, Frerichs manages investments for two Illinois college-savings programs, Bright Start and Bright Directions, both of which have earned top ratings from Morningstar.

"I know that if a young person knows they have a savings account in their name, they're three times more likely to go to college," Frerichs said. "If they're first generation, they're seven times more likely to go to college."

Illinois Treasurer Michael W. Frerichs was the featured speaker. He was a first-generation student who attended Yale University.

"I know how transformative higher education is in the lives of our young people," said Frerichs, noting ACI's focus on first-generation, low-income students. "Make a commitment, because there is intelligence and talent that will benefit all of us if we just give them the opportunities for higher education. It makes a world of difference."

In addition to Frerichs, Frank D. Cella, chair, [ACI Board of Trustees](#), Dr. Jamel SC Wright, ACI president and president of [Eureka College](#) and J. Vincent Williams, board member, offered brief remarks. Executive Director Mick Weltman helped award door prizes.

Door prizes were provided by the Chicago Bulls, Chicago Sinfonietta (which also provided music for the evening), Chicago Sky, Chicago White Sox, Chicago Wolves and Lettuce Entertain You gift cards, courtesy of Nike Whitcomb.

ACI's 2020 Benefit Reception will be held Friday, April 17, at the University Club of Chicago.