

ACI Hosts Business and College Leaders for Discussions on Workplace Preparation

Nov. 12, 2019



Table discussions focused on student preparation and employer needs.

Illinois business leaders and college and university leaders met Nov. 7 in Chicago for a round of discussions on how higher education institutions and employers can work together to prepare students for successful careers. ACI hosted the groups, which included about 30 attendees, at its annual Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion Leaders Breakfast at the University Club of Chicago.

Leaders attending the breakfast meeting proposed forming an

alliance of business and college leaders in Illinois to work on student career preparation, similar to an alliance in Maryland and Virginia of college and tech industry leaders. "Our shared goal is to better prepare students for the workplace," said [Dr. Gregor Thuswaldner](#), who is spearheading the initiative. Thuswaldner is dean of arts and sciences and professor of humanities at [North Park University](#), Chicago.

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[President Mary K. Surridge](#) of North Park University told the attendees that despite challenges in higher education – a declining student population, questions about the value of a college degree and affordability – ACI members can depend on each other. "We can depend and stand on the worthy legacies and missions of our institutions, even as we create a spirit of innovation and an atmosphere of inspiration," she said.

College is a "temporary" time period for students, she said. "It's a very significant time. But our job is to prepare them to leave us in a way that is strong, in a way that is deepened and experienced, but also inspired – inspired to step out into their communities and into their work lives and professions, and contribute," Surridge said.

[Renee Tucker Martinez](#), career education specialist at North Park, said faculty and staff at the university and other colleges and universities in Illinois have discussed a strategy-partnership idea with business leaders from a host of fields to help students be ready for the workplace.



Mick Weltman, ACI executive director, welcomed North Park University President Mary K. Surridge, left, and Renee Tucker Martinez, right, career education specialist at North Park, to the meeting.

Breakfast participants engaged in table discussions. Among the ideas that emerged for further consideration were an emphasis on

communication and interviewing skills, being agile and responding to change, problem solving, and lifelong learning. It was also suggested that faculty reach out to businesses for ongoing conversation and inviting business and colleges to form partnerships to develop curriculum.