



Associated Colleges of Illinois

TaCoya Harris
North Central College
ACI Peer Mentoring Program



TaCoya Harris, a freshman at [North Central College](#), is studying computer science with a minor in philosophy. "I'm studying computer science because I'd like to be a software developer. I really like coding and testing out software, and creating it," she says. "It's a powerful skill to have."

Harris, from Peoria, Illinois, learned about North Central through her tennis coach. She had played tennis during her high school years. Once she visited North Central, Harris says she knew it was the right size and atmosphere for her. A first-generation college student, Harris is the first in her family in a couple of generations to attend a four-year college. A recent recipient of a significant ROTC four-year scholarship, she hopes to be an example to younger family members who will follow in her footsteps.

[Watch the video!](#)



Harris comes from a single-mother household, and her mom didn't go to college. As a result, Harris was on her own to learn about the college experience. A big help, she says, is the ACI Peer Mentoring Program at North Central College, where Harris is a mentee. "It's programs like this that really comfort you to know that they're available to you, that there's people on campus, upperclassmen, who you can go to and ask for help," she says. "They've been through their first years as first generation students, and they know." For example, Harris says her peer mentor helped her understand the college's work-study program and its benefits. And, she says she has the phone numbers of other North Central peer mentors and can call when she needs some help.

"It makes me feel like I belong," Harris says of the Peer Mentoring Program and other participants. "Even though we're a small percentage together, we know each other, and we share similar experiences on campus. I am grateful to be here, and it's nice to have a group of people who share the same struggles and issues, and we can talk about it."