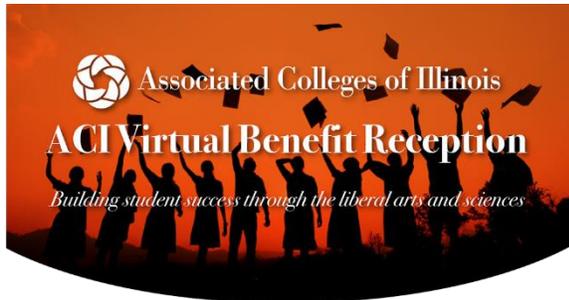


ACI Virtual Benefit Reception Features Students, Business and Government Leaders

Annual Benefit raises more than \$76,000

April 27, 2021



ACI raised more than \$76,000 at this year's [Benefit Reception](#), a virtual event because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Student speakers who benefitted from ACI's scholarships and programs were joined by business and government leaders. All urged online viewers to [donate to ACI](#), which provides scholarships and targeted programs

primarily to first-generation, low-income students enrolled at ACI's [26 member college and universities](#).

The program was hosted by Rob Johnson, president of [Rob Johnson Communications](#), Chicago, and a former Chicago television news anchor. Virtual Benefit Reception gifts to ACI can be contributed through April 30.

It's a big challenge for many first-generation and low-income students to earn a college degree and achieve career success, said Lyn Bulman, ACI board chair, opening the program. ACI helps by improving graduation rates for first-generation, low-income students and by providing financial aid. She noted that ACI's member colleges and universities contribute [\\$3.75 billion in value](#) annually to the state's economy, and more than [24,000 ACI alumni are employed by Illinois 148 largest companies](#). Plus, ACI schools provide more than 60 percent of the state's nurses and teachers, Bulman said.

Student speakers at the Virtual Benefit Reception included, from left, Dayshon Moore, Rockford University, Abby Garrett, Illinois College, and Chloe Overstreet, Eureka College.

"Investing in ACI provides value to our schools, to our students, and to our state. And the needs have never been greater," Bulman said.



Student speakers at the Virtual Benefit Reception included, from left, Dayshon Moore, Rockford University, Abby Garrett, Illinois College, and Chloe Overstreet, Eureka College.

Student testimonials emphasized opportunities ACI has

provided them. For example, Dayshon Moore, an exercise science major at [Rockford University](#), is part of the university's Men of Color Mentorship Program, through ACI's Peer Mentoring Program. Moore funds his own tuition expenses. "The support given by mentors on this campus is irreplaceable. If it weren't for this program, I wouldn't be here today," he said.

Abby Garrett, an [Illinois College](#) music performance major, pays her own tuition expenses as well. She noted how ACI has inspired her. "The work you do and the support you give matters so much, not only to me, but to other students. Your generosity encourages us to continue towards a path of higher education and a better future for ourselves," she told viewers. Garrett also provided a vocal performance for viewers.

Chloe Overstreet, a [Eureka College](#) student and ACI board member, said her ACI board experience provided an opportunity to serve the students that ACI helps. "Having been a part of several ACI programs myself, I knew how important the work ACI does is to these students," she said.

Government, business leaders endorse ACI's work

Two alumni of ACI institutions, serving in Illinois government, commented on ACI's value to the state. [Benedictine University](#) alumnus John Atkinson, Burr Ridge, Illinois, is chair of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. College transformed his life, he says. "As a proud alum of Benedictine University, I learned first-hand the value of a liberal arts education. I admire the work that ACI is doing in this state and encourage you to support this organization's efforts," Atkinson added.

Sen. Don Harmon, Oak Park, Illinois, is a [Knox College](#) alumnus and president of the Illinois Senate. He supports ACI's work to fill financial gaps for at-risk college students. "I also recognize the impact ACI is making in the state by preparing students for life after college through its college-to-career initiative," he said.

[Illinois Treasurer](#) Michael Frerichs, Champaign, Illinois, is the state's chief investment and banking officer. He was the first in his family to attend college and knows first-hand that college costs can hinder graduation rates. "That's why ACI should be commended for their dedication to help fulfill these gaps to make college attainable. The work that ACI is doing across the state is critical," Frerichs said.

ACI Board member J. Vincent Williams said he supports ACI because it helps ensure low-to-moderate income students and first-generation college students are exposed "to support networks, mentors, advocacy and career opportunities," as well a chance to earn a college degree. Williams is president and CEO of the [Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council](#).