ACI
Associated Colleges of Illinois

Reporter

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From the Executive Director

Utilizing technology for teaching and learning continues to evolve on campuses. How much its use improves outcomes or saves time varies. However, ChatGPT, the latest language model developed by OpenAI, has made big waves in the field of education. With its advanced language processing capabilities, it has become a unique tool that transforms the way we teach, learn, work and communicate.

One of the most significant impacts of ChatGPT has been its ability to provide instant answers and explanations. Although the content must still be fact-checked, information can be provided in real-time, allowing focus on a subject in a whole new way.

ChatGPT has made a significant impact in language learning. Its advanced language processing capabilities make it a powerful tool for teaching and learning new languages. For example, students can practice conversational skills with ChatGPT, receiving immediate feedback and suggestions for improvement. This type of interactive learning experience can be more effective than traditional language learning methods, helping students to acquire new language skills more quickly and efficiently.

ChatGPT has the potential to revolutionize the way we approach not only education, but also how we work. Its advanced language processing capabilities, ability to provide instant answers, and support for personalized and interactive learning experiences make it a valuable tool for many.

This month, I was at a virtual networking event that demonstrated different ways people are using ChatGPT. This includes storyboarding, process documentation for employee onboarding, creating job descriptions, writing poetry and more.

As technology continues to evolve, it is astonishing to imagine the possibilities that ChatGPT and other AI-powered tools may bring to the field of education, but it is also a bit terrifying. As with every good idea, there are reasons to pause and move forward in a thoughtful way.

Have any of you already initiated discussions or task forces to study ChatGPT and its effects on your campus? If so, please reach out to me. I'd like to learn more.

All the best,

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ACI Scholars

Bethsaida Rodriguez
Judson University
ACI General Scholarship

When she was in fifth grade, Bethsaida Rodriguez began running for fun. A coach helped her get rides to practice and track meets, and helped her acquire running shoes. Her interest in the sport grew, and she ran in high school. She got a few offers to run at the college level, choosing to attend nearby Judson University, where Rodriguez is on the university's cross country and track teams.

"I didn't know if I wanted to run or not in college, but then I saw it would be an opportunity for scholarship, so I went for it, and now I'm running here at Judson," she says. "The sport has given me a lot of opportunities and a lot of chances to do things that I wouldn't have done without the sport, so I'm very grateful for it."

Her father has helped her pay for tuition, but earlier this year, he was unable to work. Rodriguez reached out to Judson for financial help. The university offered her a lifeline by awarding her an ACI General Scholarship, which helped her remain in school.

Read more of Bethsaida's story.

ACI News

ACI's Benefit Luncheon, 'The Future We Lead,' is Next Month
Purchase tickets today! Deadline is April 14

The ACI Benefit Luncheon, "The Future We Lead," is Friday, April 21, at the University Club of Chicago from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. The event is aimed at raising critical support for ACI programs that help transform the lives of underserved students attending ACI's 24 member colleges and universities.

Guests attending this newly formatted event can attend a cocktail reception with live music provided by the North Park University Jazz Combo, followed by a three-course plated meal and inspirational program in Cathedral Hall.

The program showcases talent produced by ACI-member institutions. This year's keynote speaker is Dr. Susy Best, president and CEO of Thrive Group International, LLC., and graduate of Wheaton College and North Park University. She will share the stage with student speakers from Olivet Nazarene University and Millikin University, along with the master of ceremonies Rob Johnson, president of Rob Johnson Communications and ACI board member. Robbins Schwartz is a Partner Sponsor of the event.

Tickets are $300 each. Please join us and purchase your ticket online today! Sponsorship opportunities are available, ranging from $5,000 to $25,000. Individuals and companies can purchase event program recognitions ranging from $500 to $2,500. For additional information, contact April Arnold at aarnold@acifund.org, or call 312-263-2391, ext. 1.

Presidents of Two ACI Member Colleges and Universities to Attend Education Technology Conference

ACI and the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) are sponsoring presidents of two ACI-member colleges and universities to attend a significant education technology conference, "ASU + GSV Summit," April 17-19 in San Diego.

President Troy D. VanAken, left, of Elmhurst University and President Jamel Santa Cruze Wright, right, of Eureka College will attend the conference, said April Arnold, ACI executive director.

The summit is a collaboration of Arizona State University (ASU) and Global Silicon Valley (GSV). Initiated in 2010, "the summit connects leading minds focused on transforming society and business around learning and work," according to the event website. Last year, more than 5,200 people attended from 55 countries, including more than 600 leaders in higher education.

"In the past, independent colleges have largely been absent from this event, and I am delighted that Presidents VanAken and Wright will represent ACI as a part of the CIC's exploratory delegation this year," Arnold said. "The conference programming provides a rich proposition for all attendees. I look forward to having them share highlights of what they learn later this spring."

CIC decided to sponsor a delegation to attend to increase independent college participation, said Sherita C. Ashmon, CIC director of state councils and networks support. CIC expects to send about 50 leaders of independent colleges to the event, she said.

Blackburn College Appoints Permanent President, McKendree University Extends President's Contract

Two ACI-member institutions announced made significant announcements about their presidents this month.

The Blackburn College Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Gregory J. Meyer as the school's 19th president, college reported in a news release. Meyer, a former Blackburn professor and administrator, succeeded Dr. Mark Biermann, who recently resigned after two-and-a-half years at Blackburn to focus on health, well-being and extended family.

"Blackburn has played a profound role throughout my life and has become a significant part of my adult identity, professionally and personally," Meyer said. "I am humbled and honored by the privilege of accepting the board of trustees' appointment to serve as the next president of this remarkable institution."

During more than 30 years at Blackburn, Meyer has held a variety of academic and administrative roles, including department and division chair, professor of philosophy and religion, dean of students, college counselor and director of church relations. Although he retired in 2014, he remained actively engaged with the college, returning in 2020 as interim provost and again in 2022 as interim president.

Meyer earned a bachelor's degree from Carroll College (now Carroll University) and holds a Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. After seminary, he served as pastor of Presbyterian churches in Wisconsin until his arrival at Blackburn in 1981.

McKendree University extends president's contract

The McKendree University Board of Trustees announced a multi-year contract extension to President Daniel C. Dobbins through June 30, 2026, according to a university news release.

Dobbins is McKendree University's 33rd president and is a 1981 graduate of the institution. He is married to Mickey (Macaluso) Dobbins, also a 1981 graduate. He became president on Jan. 1, 2020.

"It continues to be one of Mickey's and my greatest honors to serve McKendree University in this capacity," said Dobbins. "While we couldn't be prouder of what we have accomplished, we have much more to achieve together as One McKendree."

Under Dobbins' direction, McKendree University has accomplished much, including developing and launching the UNITED strategic plan, launching the Clear Path admissions strategy, attaining a successful Higher Learning Commission Year 4 Accreditation assurance review, providing a major transformation to Holman Library's space with a learning and technology center, and more.

A. Montgomery Ward Foundation Renews and Increases ACI Scholarship Grant

A [foundation](#) that has provided scholarship grants to ACI for more than 50 years has awarded a new $60,000 grant to ACI to be used for scholarships for moderate-income students. The grant, provided by the A. Montgomery Ward Foundation, Bank of America, N.A., Co-Trustee, is an increase of $8,000 from a grant awarded ACI the previous year, said Lauren Holhut, ACI director, foundation relations and grants.
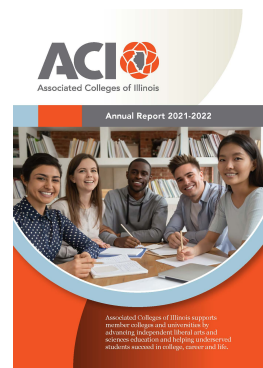
"In 2022, the average affordability gap for students at four-year colleges was about $2,600. Even a financial aid gap of $500 can have a negative impact on a student's ability to remain in college," Holhut said. "We are grateful for the generous increase in scholarship dollars that ensures more promising students will be able to stay on track for graduation and earn the critical, life-changing undergraduate degree."

The grant period is for one year beginning in January 2023 and supports the A. Montgomery Ward Foundation Scholarship Fund.

Named for Aaron Montgomery Ward, a well-known Chicago entrepreneur, the foundation was established in 1959 by his daughter, Marjorie Montgomery Ward Baker. It supports and strengthens "charitable institutions that provide quality educational and cultural programming" for current and future residents of Chicago, and surrounding communities, according to the foundation's description.

ACI's 2021-2022 Annual Report Now Available Online

[ACI's newest annual report](#) is now available through ACI's website. The report provides a review of the organization for the fiscal year June 1, 2021 through May 31, 2022.

The report focuses on 11 stories of students attending ACI-member colleges and universities, who have benefitted from ACI programs and scholarships. It contains summaries of news events, information about the organization's members, mission and leadership, programs, financial information, donors and corporate partners.

The report was designed by Walter Freeman, owner and creative director for [ef Design Group](#), Chicago, and edited by John R. Brooks, ACI director, communication.

Student Wellness is Critical to College Success
ACI and its members provide wellness resources

The past few years have been challenging for everyone. Students, in particular, report experiencing increased anxiety and stress that affects their academic and personal lives.

ACI's 24 member schools provide essential [wellness services and resources](#) for students.

In addition, to help address these concerns, [The Virtual Care Group (VCG)](#) joined ACI as a corporate partner in 2022. VCG is a Los Angeles-based telehealth firm specializing in providing online medical care and behavioral well-being services directly to students. Its telehealth services include counseling, urgent care, life coaching and on-demand crisis counseling. Services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

To learn more about VCG, contact Emily Pettit, vice president of strategic partnerships, by email at emily@thevirtualcaregroup.com or schedule a [demo](#).

By supporting the whole student, we can help them to succeed in college, career, and life.

Did You Know?

From ACI Corporate Partner Michael Best

The Looming Demographic Cliff: Proactive Strategies and Legal Considerations to Address This and Other Challenges in Higher Education

The impending "demographic cliff" is not news to anyone working in or around higher education. The sharp decline in high school graduates that is expected to decrease enrollment numbers significantly is only a few years away.

However, census data and high school graduation enrollment numbers show the demographic cliff may be more pronounced in Illinois than in other states. In Illinois, the number of high school

graduates reached its peak in 2014-15 and is projected to decline by up to around 25% by mid-2030. Based on the data and its anticipated impact in Illinois, Illinois higher education institutions ("HEIs") must ensure they have a plan in place to lessen the impact of the demographic cliff on their bottom line.

[Read more](#).

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Upcoming Events

- **Wednesday, March 8:** Presidents quarterly meeting, 3:30 p.m., via Zoom

- **Friday, March 10:** Provosts quarterly meeting, 3:30 p.m., via Zoom

- **Friday, April 21:** ACI Presidents Forum, 8 a.m., University Club of Chicago

- **Friday, April 21:** "The Future We Lead," ACI Benefit Luncheon, 12:30 p.m., University Club of Chicago

- **Friday, April 21:** ACI Board of Trustees Annual Meeting, 3 p.m., University Club of Chicago

- **Monday, May 29:** Memorial Day, ACI office closed

Your Gift is Life-Changing for a College Student in Need

Your gift supports a life-changing experience for an Illinois college student. Because of you, necessary financial support and guidance is provided to low-income and first-generation students attending ACI-member schools. Your support leads to [video testimonies](#) from ACI scholarship recipients like these that illustrate the positive effects of your generosity first-hand.

Please join us today with [a gift,](#) monthly or weekly. Every gift is appreciated in helping a student. Thank you for your support.

P.S. Inflation is a challenge for everyone right now, but especially for students. Will your company match your generous gift to double its impact?

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Lewis University - McKendree University - Millikin University - Monmouth College - North Central College
North Park University - Olivet Nazarene University - Principia College - Quincy University - Rockford University
Saint Xavier University - Trinity Christian College - University of St. Francis - Wheaton College

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