



Reporter

October - November 2022

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From the Executive Director

When I arrived at ACI roughly 90 days ago, a wonderful staff helped me get my bearings, helped me address what was and still is immediate for us, and soon we'll look forward. My excitement for what ACI does and can do has not waned. I know that as an organization that serves others, nothing we do can be done alone.

As you read this newsletter, you will see that there is much "good" going on due to collective effort. We welcome a partnership with The Virtual Care Group, to assist in telehealth options for students at our member schools. We are grateful for our corporate partners and other leaders who will present at ACI's upcoming professional development conference Nov. 11. Co-sponsors DonorSearch and Quest Food Management Services, and track sponsor The Virtual Care Group, help make this event complimentary to members. I encourage you to delve into the concept of generosity with us as we head into the season of giving and gratitude. DonorSearch's own Nathan Chappell will reference his research and provide us with data that creates awareness and gives insight into understanding personal connection, and how it impacts philanthropy now and in the future.



Speaking of connection, I have begun my conversations with member presidents and ask for your patience as we match our full schedules. The discussions that I have had so far have been candid, heartfelt and informative; I value what I am learning to guide my thoughts and look forward to continuing to listen.

There is good in the work we do to bring an educated population into society at large and good in providing what an educated individual receives from a college degree that affords them a higher income, more career opportunities and economic stability. In that spirit, I encourage you to give generously this season, whether it is to ACI, your school or your alma mater. The future we lead will help empower the lives of students, their families and foster a college education for all.

All the best,

April Arnold, CFRE
Executive Director
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ACI Scholars

Montreal Thomas Blackburn College ACI Peer Mentoring Program

Many students at [Blackburn College](#) probably have met Montreal Thomas. He tutors students in math, political science and also works as a writing assistant this fall, while attending classes at the Carlinville, Illinois, campus. Thomas, a senior from Peoria, is the oldest of five children in his family. This fall, he begins his senior year and expects to graduate in May 2023 with a double major in math and political science, and a minor in English.

Thomas chose Blackburn because it was affordable, close to home, and it had rolling admissions, he said. He likes the community atmosphere, knows other students well and visits professors often. "It's like having a second home away from my home in Peoria," he said.

[Read more of Montreal's story.](#)



ACI News

Make Plans to Attend the 2022 ACI Fall Conference: 'Coming Together Again'



The [2022 ACI Fall Conference: "Coming Together Again"](#) will be in person, Friday, Nov. 11, at the Microsoft Technology Center, left, in Chicago. [Registration](#) closes Friday, Nov. 4.

The day-long conference has 22 sessions across four tracks in advancement, finance, public relations and marketing, and student engagement. The conference is complimentary for staff of [member colleges and universities](#), as well as other ACI affiliates.

Keynote speaker Nathan Chappell, senior vice president, [DonorSearch](#), is a co-author of a new book called *The Generosity Crisis*. He will share insights on philanthropy and will lead an advancement track session, "Conquer the Generosity Crisis through Radical Connection."

ACI is grateful for Fall Conference sponsors Donor Search, [Quest Food Management Services](#) and [The Virtual Care Group](#). They help make this conference possible.

This event promises to be an exciting day where attendees can enjoy a fall day in Chicago, hear great speakers, earn prizes and network with like-minded individuals from other liberal arts and sciences institutions across Illinois.

For questions, contact Daisy Gomez, ACI director, events and conferences, at dgomez@acifund.org or 312-263-2391, ext. 0.

ACI Welcomes The Virtual Care Group as a Corporate Partner

[The Virtual Care Group](#) (VCG) has joined ACI as a corporate partner. VCG is a Los Angeles-based telehealth firm that specializes in providing online medical care and behavioral well-being services directly to students. The new ACI-VCG partnership is for three years.



Telehealth Made Easy for Higher Ed

"I'm delighted to welcome The Virtual Care Group as a new ACI corporate partner," said April Arnold, ACI executive director. "Its services are highly regarded by other state councils that have partnered with the company on behalf of their member schools. Wellness and mental health continue to be topics at the forefront of many organizations. VCG recognizes that every campus is different and can tailor services in affordable ways to help higher ed students manage their lives for ultimate success."

"Students need more support than ever before to complete their educational programs," said Emily Pettit, VCG's vice president of strategic partnerships. "This increased need is running headfirst into exhausted frontline staff or unfilled positions. In aggregate data gathered from our campus partners nationwide, we found that 84 percent of students who use our behavioral-health services never sought support of any kind on campus."

Telehealth services save on costs, are easily available

VCG's telehealth services include counseling, urgent care, life coaching and on-demand crisis counseling, and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. With VCG, colleges and universities can make telehealth services available to students at less than the cost to add staff, Pettit said. In addition, ACI-member colleges and universities will benefit from "association volume discount pricing," meaning that as the number of people covered increases, the price decreases.

VCG's solutions remove common barriers to accessing health-care services, Pettit said. For example, students seeking VCG's services do not need health insurance, credit cards or Social Security numbers. VCG's services are available at no cost to students, with no caps on services, she said. Health-care providers are state licensed, U.S. board-certified physicians. Counselors are licensed, with master's degrees.

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

ACI's corporate partners provide helpful services to members

In addition to VCG, ACI has seven other [corporate partners](#), including Ardeo Education Solutions, Degree Insurance, Expense Reduction Analysts, Graystone Consulting, Michael Best, Quest Food Management Services and Sikich. These partners enhance ACI's work and provide valuable services to ACI-member colleges and universities, Arnold said.

ACI's Fall Work and Life Skills Boot Camp Draws More than 100 Attendees



The fall ACI Work and Life Skills Boot Camp themed, Ready? Tech. Launch!, held Oct. 6, attracted 104 attendees, including students and staff from eight ACI member schools.

The virtual event featured sessions in digital entrepreneurialism, fintech and some of ACI's member-exclusive career readiness programs.

A post-event survey showed most attendees reported the sessions were informative, and they learned something new, said Constance Willoughby, ACI director, programs. Ready? Tech. Launch! is [available on-demand](#) and can be accessed by registering prior to viewing. Registration data collected indicates that the majority of students who attended this event identified as either low-income, minority or first generation, Willoughby added.

The spring edition of the ACI Work and Life Skills Boot Camp will be held virtually April 13, 2023, and will focus on serving students interested in launching careers in the health-care industry. Registration will launch in mid-March and will be free to students attending ACI schools.

For more information, contact Constance Willoughby at cwilloughby@acifund.org or 312-263-2391, ext. 4.

Publicity Club of Chicago Presents Two Awards to ACI

A communications professional organization, Publicity Club of Chicago (PCC), recognized ACI with two awards for resources and programs in 2021. The awards, presented Oct. 27, were part of the PCC's annual [Golden Trumpet Awards](#), which recognize excellence in communication.

Two members of the [ACI Board of Trustees](#) attended the ceremony and accepted ACI's awards. Toya Garcia-Bradow, left, and James L. Applegate, right, are members of the Communications Committee. Applegate is committee chair and Garcia-Bradow is vice chair.

One Silver award was presented for "[A Smarter Solution: How Liberal Arts and Business Together are Solving Illinois' Challenges](#)," a March 9, 2021 webinar focused on ACI's alumni employment data. Organized by the Communications Committee, with ACI staff assistance, speakers included students, corporate board members, industry leaders, and member college and university presidents. More than 200 people have viewed the program, either live or on-demand.

A second Silver award was presented to ACI for its [2020-2021 Annual Report](#). Since 2016, ACI's annual reports have been recognized seven times by the PCC and the Public Relations Society of America Chicago chapter.



Principia College Ranked 'Best Value' National Liberal Arts College

ACI-member college earns top spot in U.S. News & World Report rankings



PRINCIPIA COLLEGE

[Principia College](#), Elsah, Illinois, is the [#1 Best Value National Liberal Arts College](#) in America, says *U.S. News & World Report* in its 2022-2023 Best Colleges Rankings.

The magazine's Best Value calculation takes into account a school's academic quality, as indicated by its 2022-2023 U.S. News Best Colleges ranking, and the 2021-2022 net cost of attendance for an out-of-state student who received the average level of need-based financial aid.

"We love that Principia College brings together world-class education, a truly global community, spiritual discovery and authentic character growth," said President John W. Williams, in a college news release. "We're proud to be recognized as a value leader as we work hard to ensure that quality education and affordability go hand-in-hand."

Overall, Principia is ranked #51 of all national liberal arts colleges in the annual U.S. News survey. About 24 percent of Principia's student population comes from more than 26 different countries, tying the school for the #2 spot for Most International Students for National Liberal Arts Colleges, the college reported.

Illinois College President Named Council of Independent Colleges Board Chair

Illinois College President Barbara A. Farley has been named chair of the [Council of Independent Colleges \(CIC\) Board of Directors](#). Farley, who was previously CIC's vice chair for programs, is a former president of ACI.

"It is a great privilege to join talented board members from across the country and CIC President Marjorie Hass in advancing a wide variety of initiatives that support the success of independent higher education and campus leaders," said Farley in an [Illinois College news release](#). "CIC has played a pivotal role in my academic career and in meeting the needs of the colleges I have been fortunate to serve."

Farley will lead with wisdom, grace and insight, said CIC's Hass. "Her dedication to independent colleges and universities, and to the community of leaders who serve this essential sector, is inspiring," she added. "Under her leadership, CIC will continue to develop current, relevant and useful programs and services for its members."

Farley has led Illinois College since 2013. During her tenure, the college has achieved record-high enrollment, launched multiple innovative academic programs, expanded technological learning resources across campus and upgraded athletic facilities, the college release said. The Campaign for Illinois College, a historically successful campaign that raised more than \$50 million.

In addition her CIC role, Farley currently serves as chair of the Midwest Conference Presidents' Council and is a member of the boards for Memorial Health in Springfield, Illinois, and Jacksonville Memorial Hospital. Illinois College was recently named recipient of the Jacksonville Economic Development Corporation's Harold Cox Industry of the Year Award.



Did You Know?

From ACI Corporate Partner Sikich Student Loan Relief Updates and Considerations

Up to \$20,000 in loan debt forgiveness was announced for federal student loans for undergraduate and graduate programs. Navigating these changes and eligibility can be complicated and confusing. With more than 43 million federal loan borrowers, it's important to prepare for the upcoming changes and potential impact on your financial future.

[Read more.](#)

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Upcoming Events

- **Friday, Nov. 11:** ACI Professional Development Conference, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Microsoft Technology Center, Chicago
- **Thursday, Nov. 17:** ACI Board of Trustees, 4 p.m., via Zoom
- **Thursday-Friday, Nov. 24-25:** Thanksgiving and Day After Thanksgiving, ACI office closed
- **Friday, Dec. 9:** Provosts quarterly meeting, 3:30 p.m., via Zoom
- **Wednesday, Dec. 14:** Presidents quarterly meeting, 3:30 p.m., via Zoom
- **Friday, Dec. 23-Monday, Jan. 2:** Christmas/New Year's holidays, ACI office closed
- **Monday, Jan. 16:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day, ACI office closed

Year-End Giving to ACI Can Help Underrepresented Students Earn College Degrees

As we approach the end of 2022, we hope you'll include ACI in your year-end giving plans. There's a financial benefit for you, and your gift provides significant support for Illinois college students. Contributions from donors such as you provide scholarships for well-deserving students. With your help, we can continue to provide financial support and guidance to low-income and first-generation students attending [ACI-member schools](#). Together, we can bridge the financial gap to help students succeed in college and beyond.



Please join us today with a gift through [ACI's website](#). We welcome one-time gifts, or you can arrange regular gifts semi-annually, quarterly, monthly or weekly. Watch [video testimonies](#) from ACI scholarship recipients that illustrate the positive effects of your generosity first-hand. We sincerely appreciate every gift! Thank you for supporting ACI.

P.S. Here's a win-win situation: if you still need to take a required minimum distribution (RMD) from a retirement account before the end of the year, donate it directly to ACI. As a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), you'll be supporting our work, avoiding an IRS penalty and lowering your taxable income!



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 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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