



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

Associated Colleges
of Illinois supports
member colleges and
universities by advancing
independent liberal arts
and sciences education
and helping underserved
students succeed in
college, career and life.

Many Thanks!

Dear Friends of ACI,

The past year has been tough for us all. In addition to the impact on our students, our schools and our families, the pandemic created new challenges for us at ACI. It was more important than ever to support students already struggling with social and financial difficulties while, at the same time, having to re-think many of our fundraising and educational events.

We are proud that – with your help - we were able to rise to those challenges. We raised more than \$581,440 for need-based scholarships and emergency financial aid. We heard from the recipients that these funds made a critical difference in enabling them to continue their educations. We sustained our programs, including peer mentoring (for underserved first-year students) and college-to-career initiatives (boot camps, career mentoring and micro-internships). Moreover, despite the pandemic, we were able to expand our activities. For example, we held our first virtual video event to share data about the ACI alumni employed in Illinois and the concrete value that an education at our schools can provide to individual students and to the community. We also won significant grants to promote micro-internships at our member schools, career leadership for students and recently, to work with partners to investigate how to help more community college students transfer to earn bachelor's degrees at ACI-affiliated schools.

We don't yet know when, or if, we will be able to return to in-person programs in 2022. What we do know is that we will continue to focus on supporting our member institutions in advancing independent liberal arts and sciences education and helping underserved students succeed. We know that our work makes a difference.

2022 will mark ACI's 70th anniversary and we'd like to celebrate by drawing even greater attention to our mission and activities. We are very grateful for your past help. Your gifts have already made a difference in the lives of students attending ACI-affiliated institutions. But, despite our efforts, the pandemic has overshadowed our plans for growth, and we hope we can now count on your continued, or even expanded, support.



Lyn Bulman
Chair, Board of Trustees



S. Georgia Nugent
President



Mick Weltman
Executive Director

ACI Virtual Event Focuses Attention on Illinois Liberal Arts and Sciences Education

Strong connections between Illinois liberal arts and sciences colleges and universities, and the state's business community, can keep more students in Illinois for higher education and help them move into promising careers at hundreds of Illinois-based companies, according to higher education and business leaders. Several spoke on the topic in a virtual video event in March 2021, sponsored by ACI.

Called "A Smarter Solution: How Liberal Arts and Business Together are Solving Illinois' Challenges," the online event was hosted by President Jamel Santa Cruz Wright, Eureka College, and the former ACI president. "We can't do it alone and neither can the business community," she said. "When educators and the business community work together, they help students prepare for successful and fulfilling lives, and help the state work toward future growth and prosperity."



Chloe Overstreet



Kunal Kapoor

Presidents Philip G. Ryken of Wheaton College, Teresa L. Amott of Knox College and Troy D. Hammond of North Central College commented on keeping students in Illinois for college, especially ACI-member schools; experiential, hands-on liberal arts and science education coupled with teaching critical thinking skills at ACI schools; and ACI data that shows more than 24,000 alumni of ACI schools working at companies in Illinois – including at least 25 or more working at 148 Illinois companies.

Kunal Kapoor, CEO of Morningstar, Inc., Chicago, and graduate of Monmouth College, said the pandemic of the past year tested the value of a liberal arts and sciences education. "It was a fantastic time to show whether you had learning agility, critical thinking skills, the willingness to adapt, and also the willingness to think about the future in entirely different ways than maybe you had envisioned," he said.

Chloe Overstreet, a junior at Eureka College and ACI board member, said her college experience has prepared her well for the future, and she hopes to remain in Illinois. "The focus in the liberal arts curriculum on more than simply content but transferable skills has forced me to use critical thinking, communication and analysis in every class I've taken here at Eureka. It is this focus on transferable skills that sets the liberal arts education apart from other schools," she said.

Virtual Conferences Attract Nearly 400 Attendees

Despite the pandemic, ACI's popular professional development conferences drew 399 college and university staff for fall and spring conferences. Both events were held online via Zoom webinar. ACI's 26 member colleges and universities had at least one representative attending both conferences.

Conference sessions were divided each time into four tracks. Sessions included topics in Advancement, Finance, Public Relations and Marketing and Student Engagement. Each track session was held exclusively on a particular day via Zoom webinar and led by college and university staff or business professionals. Recordings of each session were provided to attendees after the conference.



ACI's conferences drew nearly 400 participants from member schools.

ACI 2021 Virtual Benefit Reception Features Students, Business and Government Leaders

ACI raised more than \$76,000 at its 2021 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.



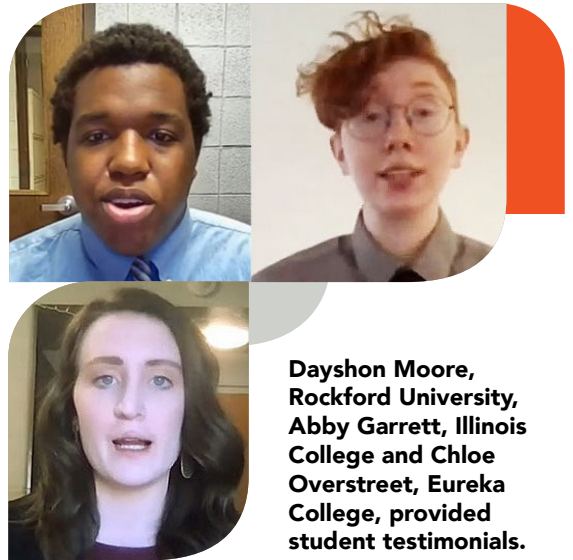
Rob Johnson

The program was hosted by Rob Johnson, president of Rob Johnson Communications, Chicago, and a former Chicago television news anchor.

Noting the challenge for many first-generation and low-income students to earn a college degree

and achieve career success, Lyn Bulman, ACI board chair, said ACI helps by improving graduation rates for first-generation, low-income students and by providing financial aid. ACI member colleges and universities contribute \$3.75 billion in value 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 testimonials were provided by Dayshon Moore of Rockford University, Abby Garrett, of Illinois College and Chloe Overstreet of Eureka College and ACI board member. Each commented about the importance of ACI scholarships and programs, both of which have helped make it possible for them to continue their college educations.



Dayshon Moore, Rockford University, Abby Garrett, Illinois College and Chloe Overstreet, Eureka College, provided student testimonials.

Two alumni of ACI institutions, serving in Illinois government, commented on ACI's value. Benedictine University graduate John Atkinson, Burr Ridge, Illinois, and chair of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, said he knows first-hand about the value of a liberal arts education and admires ACI's work. Sen. Don Harmon, Oak Park, Illinois, a Knox College graduate and president of the Illinois Senate, supports ACI's work to fill financial gaps for at-risk college students and recognizes ACI's impact by preparing students for life after college, he said.

Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs, Champaign, Illinois, the state's chief investment and banking officer, said he was the first in his family to attend college and knows how college costs can hinder graduation rates. "ACI should be commended for their dedication to help fulfill gaps to make college attainable. The work that ACI is doing across the state is critical," he said.

ACI Boot Camps Help Attendees Develop Career and Life Skills

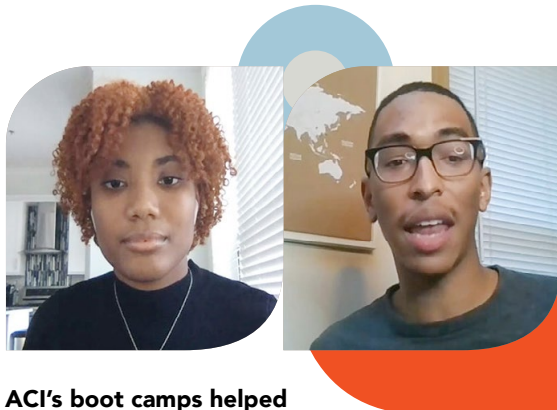
ACI offered three online boot camps for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, in the months of September, January and March. 207 people registered for the Zoom webinar sessions.

Boot camp themes were "Life Study and Work in the Time of Pandemic" (September 2020), "The Right Image, The Right Information" (January 2021) and "Technology & Career Success + Growing Your Own Business" (March 2021).

ACI's boot camps were created for low-income, first-generation and students of color, however, all sessions were open to all students of ACI-member colleges and universities. Each session was focused on delivering skills, information and networking resources that advance career development for these students.

Among topics presented by expert speakers from ACI schools and private businesses were micro-internships, tools for seeking and securing careers, mentoring programs, financial literacy, diversity and inclusion, dressing for success, technology knowledge and uses, and developing and funding small businesses.

The boot-camp program was launched in 2019-20, with support from a Council of Independent Colleges First Opportunity Partners Grant.



ACI's boot camps helped advance career development for students at ACI-member schools.

ACI Initiates Partnership with SAGE Scholars to Help with Tuition Costs

ACI is working with SAGE Scholars, an organization that helps bridge the gap between students who want an affordable, private college education with colleges that will guarantee tuition discounts. There's no cost for students, families or colleges to participate.



"SAGE Scholars has the potential to help many students who want to attend ACI's member colleges and universities," said ACI Executive Director Mick Weltman. "We are working directly with our members to encourage as many as possible to join SAGE Scholars, because this program can definitely help in their academic recruiting efforts."

Founded in 1995, Philadelphia-based SAGE Scholars is a unique, private college savings program. Member families earn "Tuition Rewards Points" by investing in preferred providers of dental, health and vision insurance, life insurance, retirement plans, college funding plans, fraternal organization memberships and other financial incentives. One Tuition Rewards Point equals \$1 in guaranteed scholarship funds at a SAGE Scholars member college or university.

"SAGE Scholars, and our Tuition Rewards program, are integral in helping families prepare for higher education at all stages of a child's life," said A.J. Healy, director of corporate marketing, SAGE Scholars. More than 400 private colleges and universities, including 16 ACI members, are in the SAGE Scholars College Consortium.

Foundation Grants Awarded to ACI Support Students

Several foundations provided significant grants to ACI in 2020-2021.

"Grants are especially important to ACI, because these gracious funders make it possible for us to award scholarships to students who need financial assistance to remain in school and earn degrees," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "In addition, these grants help students with emergency financial needs, and they help us provide helpful programming directly to students."

Foundation grants, not including those foundations that wish to remain anonymous, awarded to ACI include:

A. Montgomery Ward Foundation

• **The A. Montgomery Ward Foundation, Chicago:** It awarded \$52,000 to ACI to fund scholarships to students at member schools. Established in 1959, the foundation supports and strengthens charitable institutions that provide quality educational and cultural programming for current and future residents of Chicago and surrounding communities. This foundation has provided grants to ACI for more than 50 years.



• **The BNSF Railway Foundation, Fort Worth, Texas:** The foundation awarded \$20,000 to the Peer Mentoring Program and has supported ACI programs for more than 40 years. The mission of the BNSF Railway Foundation is to "support and improve the general welfare and quality of life in communities served by BNSF."



• **CME Group Foundation, Chicago:** This foundation awarded a two-year general operating grant totaling \$50,000 to ACI. Funds will be provided to ACI in two installments of \$25,000 each, to be used from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2023. CME Group Foundation previously awarded ACI a one year, \$25,000 general operating grant.



• **ITW Foundation, Glenview, Illinois:** ITW awarded \$10,000 for ACI's Peer Mentoring Program. The program now operates on 12 ACI-member campuses. It works to help first-generation, low-income students through the critical first year in college, and helps them remain in college and earn degrees. The ITW Foundation has supported ACI programs for 59 years.

McGraw Foundation

• **The McGraw Foundation, Dundee, Illinois:** It provided a \$95,000 grant to ACI to be used for emergency financial aid for students attending ACI-affiliated colleges and universities. The funds are administered through the McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid Fund, which helps students facing unanticipated personal or financial hardship. The foundation has supported ACI programs for nearly 50 years, and since the mid-1990s, it has supported emergency financial aid.



• **The PACCAR Foundation, Bellevue, Washington:** The foundation supports scholarships through ACI, and increased its funding from \$10,000 to \$30,000. PACCAR has provided scholarship funds to ACI and member students for more than 25 years.

SIRAGUSA FAMILY FOUNDATION

• **The Siragusa Family Foundation, Chicago:** It awarded ACI \$10,000 for the Peer Mentoring Program. Established in 1950, the foundation "supports organizations that provide access and opportunity to the underserved so that they are empowered to help themselves and to experience a better quality of life." The Siragusa Family Foundation has provided support to ACI student success programs for more than 30 years.

ACI Awarded Matching Grant for Career Leaders Program



THE COUNCIL OF
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

The Council of Independent Colleges, (CIC) Washington, D.C., committed \$18,000 to help fund ACI's Career Leaders Program, to be launched in fall 2022. The program is a collaborative program designed to provide underserved, high-achieving college seniors with a year of comprehensive training and support in developing business, social and leadership skills to help secure entry-level positions leading to meaningful careers.

In addition each participant in the ACI Career Leaders Program will be awarded a \$2,000 scholarship to help fill financial gaps on the way to graduation.

ACI's proposal was funded through a First Opportunity Partners grant from CIC, with support from the UPS Foundation, contingent upon ACI raising additional funds. The Career Leaders Program integrates ACI's College-to-Career initiatives for the benefit of students at ACI's colleges and universities.

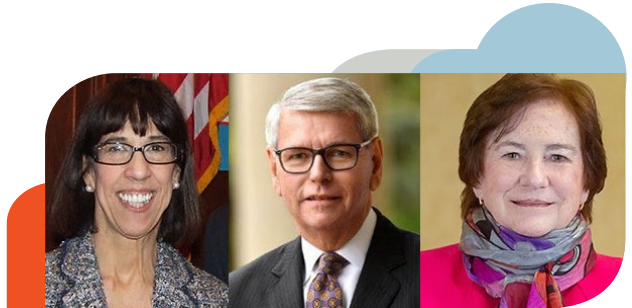
Each ACI member institution will select one underserved, high-achieving senior to participate in the Career Leaders Program. Chloe Overstreet, ACI student board member from Eureka College, is program advisor and student liaison.

ACI Board Recognizes Departing Presidents, Reappoints Members, Reviews Fiscal Year

At its annual meeting in April 2021, ACI Board of Trustees members expressed appreciation to three member college and university presidents who retired, reappointed board members and updated the organization's bylaws. The board's annual meeting was held virtually because of the ongoing pandemic.

Retired presidents included Teresa L. Amott, Knox College, who served 10 years; Donna M. Carroll, Dominican University, 27 years; and John C. Bowling, Olivet Nazarene University, 30 years. "We want to thank you for the time you've spent with your institutions, but also as part of ACI," said Lyn Bulman, ACI board chair, on the board's behalf. "It matters to us that we have presidents who are involved. We wish you every success as you move into the next phase of your lives."

The board reappointed 11 members to two-year terms and approved minor revisions to the ACI bylaws, relating to membership and leadership responsibilities. It also approved revisions to board members' roles and responsibilities.



ACI board members recognized three retired presidents of ACI institutions, including, from left, Teresa L. Amott, John C. Bowling and Donna M. Carroll.


ACI Member School Demographics Page Available at acifund.org

ACI has compiled detailed data on its 26 member colleges and universities, expanding data it has compiled for the past few years. The newest information is found on ACI's Member School Demographics page at <https://acifund.org/member-school-demographics/> on the ACI website.

The information includes the number of men and women enrolled at each institution, ethnicity and Pell Grant recipients. ACI compiled the information because potential donors often ask for

specific demographic information about ACI member colleges and universities, said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director.

ACI also has employment data on alumni of member schools, plus information about the financial impact of member colleges and universities, academic programs, including the most popular programs at each school, and financial aid available to students.


Associated Colleges of Illinois

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MEMBER SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Current as of Fall 2018

Members	Student Population	Female	Male	American Indian, Alaskan or Native Hawaiian	Asian	Black/African American	Latinx	White	Multiracial	Ethnicity Unknown	Pell Grant Recipients
Augustana College	2,543	1,450	1,093	0	51	101	254	1,780	77	280	607
Aurora University	4,020	2,613	1,407	0	80	281	1,286	1,970	121	282	1,822
Benedictine University	2,718	1,468	1,250	27	380	218	463	1,168	0	462	1,144
Blackburn College	566	340	226	0	6	68	23	424	11	34	353
Concordia University Chicago	1,511	891	620	0	30	181	468	665	45	122	677
Dominican University	2,106	1,432	674	0	63	126	1,158	612	21	126	1,065
Elmhurst University	2,848	1,709	1,139	0	142	142	655	1,709	86	114	1,066
Eureka College	567	272	295	0	0	45	17	465	23	17	230
Illinois College	983	501	482	0	10	98	69	708	29	69	427
Illinois Wesleyan University	1,693	880	813	0	85	102	162	1,168	51	135	405
Judson University	1,034	610	424	0	21	124	217	496	21	155	442
Knox College	1,333	760	573	0	67	107	200	640	67	252	448
Lewis University	4,351	2,219	2,132	0	218	261	914	2,567	130	261	1,424
McKendree University	1,951	1,034	917	0	0	273	98	1,210	59	311	687
Millikin University	1,985	1,131	854	0	20	278	139	1,330	99	119	785
Monmouth College	914	457	457	0	9	91	91	585	37	101	335

Detailed information about ACI's member colleges and universities is available on the ACI website.

ACI Team Recognized by Chicago-area Public Relations Organizations

Two Chicago-area public relations organizations – the Publicity Club of Chicago (PCC) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Chicago chapter -- recognized the ACI staff for outstanding work in 2020.

ACI earned two awards from the PCC, including a “Golden Trumpet Award,” for the organization's 2020 Virtual Benefit Reception. The Golden Trumpet Award is given to the judges' top choice in each awards category. The ACI Benefit Reception was honored in a category for special events done virtually.

In addition, PCC presented a Silver Trumpet Award to ACI's 2019-2020 Annual Report, the second year it has honored the organization's annual report. ACI's annual report has been honored in four of the past five years by Chicago-area public relations organizations.

PRSA Chicago recognized *ACI Reporter*, the organization's newsletter, with its Award of Excellence for digital publishing. PRSA Chicago previously recognized *ACI Reporter* with a similar award in 2019.



The Publicity Club of Chicago presented two awards to ACI.

Did You Notice Something Different?



You may have noticed something new in our communications this year: our new logo. This is the first remake of ACI's logo for at least a decade and perhaps longer.

The new design emphasizes the ACI acronym, familiar to most people who know our organization. We also kept the familiar orange color in the circle design, which we revised to include the state image of Illinois.

Our new logo was designed by Walter Freeman, owner and creative director, of Design Group, Chicago.

The Chicago chapter of PRSA recognized *ACI Reporter*.



Student Profiles

Mia Pitts-Hope

Wheaton College
McGraw Foundation Emergency
Financial Aid Grant



Mia Pitts-Hope, a first-generation college student, arrived at Wheaton College four years ago with important goals: Earn a college degree and begin a career with Nike, a company she dreamed of working for while growing up Denver. Pitts-Hope, a communication major at Wheaton, says, "I want to work for their ad department, making their ad campaigns, like in a magazine, TV and the commercials. I love Nike."

Pitts-Hope, the youngest of three children, was home-schooled. Her tutor encouraged her to apply at Wheaton because the tutor's daughter attended the school. "When I got in, I was really shocked," she said. "But then the aspect of 'can I afford it?' came into question." Pitts-Hope could not afford a campus visit when she was admitted. Her first visit was during first-year student orientation.

Pitts-Hope was raised by her maternal grandmother, a source of inspiration, plus family and financial support. "My biological parents couldn't do it at the time, so my grandmother stepped in. I was very little," Pitts-Hope said. Her grandmother passed away suddenly in November 2021 in the midst of the pandemic, the result of an aneurysm. Pitts-Hope has also faced other tragedies while attending Wheaton. Three weeks into her first year, her father died. In 2021, an uncle died from brain cancer. Through all of the losses, and her own health concerns, Wheaton College faculty, staff and students have graciously supported her, Pitts-Hope said.

As an independent student, she has faced the financial realities of college tuition costs and inquired about scholarships. "I just needed a sign of life because the expenses were starting wear me down," she said. "My savings were starting to wear down as well. I wanted to be fully independent and support myself."

Fortunately, Pitts-Hope was awarded a grant from McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid Fund through ACI. "When that grant came in, I just sat at the computer in shock," she said. "This is the hope that I was praying for. In that moment, I was like, 'my life has been changed.' It really has been a blessing." In the future, Pitts-Hope said she wants to earn a doctorate.

See video interviews at
<https://acifund.org/student-stories/>

Aileen Duran

University of St. Francis
ACI General Scholarship



Aileen Duran remembers growing up with various health-related problems and feeling as though few people were listening to her health concerns. "I've had two surgeries now to fix my knees," Duran said. "I wonder if this could have been avoided if people listened to me. I want to go into the health-care field so that others don't have to go through what I did." That is exactly what Duran has done. The sophomore is a nursing major at the University of St. Francis (USF) in Joliet.

Duran is one of three sisters who grew up in Chicago, the children of parents with roots in Mexico. She applied to more than 20 colleges and universities before deciding on USF, she said. "I really liked St. Francis' nursing program," Duran said. It was the passing rates on nursing licensure exams, up-to-date technology and simulation labs that convinced her.

Duran sees herself working as a surgical nurse or possibly for a government agency, such as the FBI. The FBI? Duran explained a family member works in the agency and using her nursing degree for a career as a forensic scientist is an attractive idea, she says.

Duran is also a musician. She attended the Chicago High School for the Arts and plays the oboe. Duran plays in a chamber group with the Joliet Symphony Orchestra. She also has learned how to play the saxophone and plays with university's pep band.

Because of her heavy class load, living on the Joliet campus would be a great help, she said. Duran learned of the ACI General Scholarship through discussions with a financial aid counselor. "That scholarship is what helped me come back to on-campus living," she said. "We're able to use that toward other things so we can save the money we have to living on campus, which was very vital to me."

"Coming from a low-income, minority, immigrant family, it really is hard to get the funds to go to college," Duran added. "It means so much just to be able to return this year and be able to be here right now. I really can't emphasize enough the impact it has made on me and my family. It's a blessing."

Carlos Robles

Saint Xavier University
ACI General Scholarship



Carlos Robles graduated with a degree in finance from Saint Xavier University in December 2021 -- earlier than he expected, thanks in part to an ACI General Scholarship. What led him to a career in finance began with a job in a Chicago-area grocery chain. Born in Ecuador, Robles came to the United States as an infant with his older sisters and his mother, Luz. The family lives in Chicago.

"I actually got into finance because right after high school, I got a job at Jewel-Osco, in the meat market," Robles said. "I just took my manager's advice and kept progressing. A year or two after I started, he started showing me the financial world of the meat market, and I started learning about the numbers about margin, profit, advertising and all that that that comes with finance. I just took a love for it." He also earned a promotion to assistant manager in the department.

Robles' mentor told him about Saint Xavier, its affordable tuition, and small classes. After attending a community college, Robles transferred to Saint Xavier in 2019, and began taking classes in finance. A first-generation college student, he says it's important to him to earn a degree because of the sacrifices his mother made. "She had to leave her country and everything behind and come here and give us the life that she wanted, a better life," Robles says. Robles is the family's fourth college graduate.

Robles was awarded his ACI General Scholarship after inquiring about scholarships. The scholarship provided funds at a time when his family was struggling after his mother got laid off from her job as a hotel chef. Robles and his sisters contributed funds from their jobs to help with household expenses. "It (the scholarship) helped immensely. I was grateful for that," Robles said. The scholarship helped Robles meet tuition expenses earlier this year, and it helped him save funds for summer classes, which made it possible for him to graduate early.

Robles expressed his appreciation to the donors who made his scholarship possible. "I was in a situation where I felt at times whether I could further my education or I had to take a break from my education," he said. "It's going to help someone who truly wants to better themselves and get out of where they are now and improve their life overall."

Cory Rice

Quincy University
McGraw Foundation
Emergency Financial Aid



Devin Rice

Quincy University
ACI General Scholarship



Cory Rice and Devin Rice are fraternal twins from St. Louis who chose to attend Quincy University in Western Illinois. They chose the school because it was near home, they could play on the university's football team and family members could attend most of their games. To help with their studies, each was awarded a scholarship through ACI -- Cory was awarded a McGraw Emergency Financial Aid Fund grant and Devin, an ACI General Scholarship.

At first, neither knew much about Quincy University, Cory said. But the university and the scholarships helped convince them to attend. "Our mom was able to come to every game. It's easier for her and financially, Quincy has been helpful," he says.

"Quincy felt like a family," says Devin. "When I met the coaches, they really brought us in. They kind of took us under their wing. I decided to take the journey with them and be a Hawk."

Cory and Devin were raised by their mother, Dawn, with help from supportive family members. They have a younger brother who attends Missouri Valley College, Marshall, Missouri, and plays basketball. "It's hard for a single mom to raise three kids by herself and put them into college," Cory said. Devin added that he is grateful for his family, including a grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousin. "Everybody helped us on this journey. I can't thank my mom enough," Devin said.

Today, both men are sports management majors. It's a natural for both, because the family has been heavily involved in sports most of their lives, said Cory. After college, he wants to become a physical therapy assistant, which keeps him involved in sports. Devin switched majors to exercise science and then to sports management. "My goal is to have my own gym one day and train kids to be athletes," he says.

Their scholarships through ACI make a difference for both. "With the scholarship, it obviously helps," Cory says. "At the end of the day, it's going to help, and it's going to make you a better student and make your education better."

Family support has also been a big factor in their college success. "Without the support, without the scholarship, I don't know where my life would be right now," Devin says. "It's truly a blessing."

Chloe Hanegraaf

Olivet Nazarene University
PACCAR Foundation Scholarship



When Chloe Hanegraaf went to college, she set her sights on earning an associate's degree and a possible teaching career. But her life changed significantly after completing the degree at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Heights, Illinois. Her Christian background and friends led her to think about attending Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois, not far from her home. She eventually began a three-year journey, this time in a very different field – nursing.

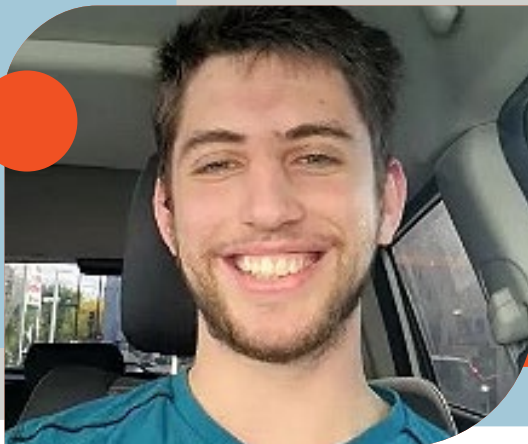
Her paternal grandmother was a nurse, and Hanegraaf liked the idea of working with people to help them get better and improve their health. But she knew getting there would be difficult. To enter the nursing program at Olivet Nazarene, Hanegraaf had to pass the entry level exam to get into the program. "I was required to take microbiology and chemistry. I had already taken my biology course. Those were hard classes. I definitely didn't think I would pass any of them, but by the grace of God, I did," she said. After graduation, she is considering a career as a critical care nurse, and possibly, a travel nurse.

Hanegraaf was encouraged to apply for the PACCAR Foundation scholarship. "Without scholarship funds and the financial assistance that I receive, I would not be able to attend Olivet," she said. "Every single dollar counts for me. Whether it's a \$500 grant or maybe a thousand, \$300 ... It is honestly such a blessing to receive that. A donor's contribution has a very big effect."

Hanegraaf is grateful for the scholarships ACI provides to college students like her. "I love what you are doing," she said. "There are amazing ways to help you out financially. I just want to say thank you. I'm very appreciative."

Marlon Fadrugas

North Park University
ACI General Scholarship



Marlon Fadrugas is part of a close-knit immigrant family living in Chicago. He will graduate from North Park University with a degree in marketing and is headed for a career as a Chicago police officer. Fadrugas came to the United States at a young age from Cuba with his parents. After graduation from Chicago Math and Science Academy, Fadrugas chose North Park because of its Christian values, small classrooms, its location in a diverse neighborhood and the scholarships it offered him.

Since middle school, Fadrugas said he has been interested in marketing. He liked the idea of helping people get products and services they want and need through market analysis, advertising and promotion, and sales. Police officers serve people's needs, he said, and he wants to be part of an organization that's changing. "You have to work hard to make sure that change happens," Fadrugas said. "I feel that a good way of doing that is to become part of an organization that right now is going through a lot of change and lot of turmoil, in a way."

Fadrugas finances his own education to avoid burdening his family with tuition costs. He also helps pay tuition costs for his sister, Sofia, also a student at North Park. Financially, things haven't been easy. He learned about and got the ACI General Scholarship, which would help with tuition expenses in his final semester in school.

"It made the world of a difference. I cannot state it enough," Fadrugas said. "The difference you made in my life, it changed me. It made me feel like I have a second chance. I have an opportunity to make it."

"My father and my mother, both of them always pushed us to do better and overcome challenges that they faced when they were younger. They wanted us to be better than them. So, it's been a big blessing to me, having the family that I had," he said.

Elie Imani

North Central College
Peer Mentoring Program



Elie Imani is part of a family of six in Rwanda and is the third of three brothers to attend North Central College in Naperville. The eldest earned a full scholarship to study political science at North Central, and went on to study at Yale University and the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. A second brother also earned a full scholarship and studied computer science. A couple of years ago, Imani came to Naperville to attend high school and is now a first-year student at North Central, with interests in political science and computer science.

Small classes and opportunities to work with professors are big pluses at North Central, Imani says. "I've been having deep conversations about politics, about computer science, with my professors," he says. "And I've been enjoying that. I'm very, very sure that will definitely help me with my future." Since he was young, Imani says he has been interested in political science and leadership. "I wanted to deal with politics because I understood that Africa faces a huge leadership crisis. I believe that to accomplish this, I need to learn how to serve others first." He plans to return to Africa after school to be a mentor to other young people, providing hope for a better future.

After he was admitted to North Central, Imani joined the ACI Peer Mentoring Program at the college which helps first-generation students navigate their early years in college. Mentors have suggested classes to take, providing ideas about extracurricular programs, connecting him to important academic and financial resources, and giving him tours of the campus and Chicago area. "I'll be honest, I'd be struggling if it weren't for the mentors that I had in this Peer Mentoring Program," Imani says. "They genuinely helped me." The mentors, he says, are like brothers and sisters who helped him avoid isolation. He looks forward to their meetings together each month, he says.

Imani is grateful for donors who make the Peer Mentoring Program possible. "It's been touching my heart deeply, deep in my heart, that there are good people out there helping students, helping me and encouraging me, inspiring me to help others as well. Because it's a real opportunity that not everybody gets," Imani says. Imani speaks four languages. His father – a Church of the Brethren pastor and farmer – and mother did not attend college but fostered a deep connection to the church for their children.

Morgan Mendiola

Lewis University
A. Montgomery Ward
Foundation Scholarship



Morgan Mendiola, Romeoville, Illinois, set her sights on becoming a teacher and possibly, a college professor. She chose to attend nearby Lewis University, with a dual major in secondary education and psychology. A sophomore, Mendiola made it through her first year and the pandemic year of 2020-2021.

Her decision to become a teacher goes back to her high school days. "Once I got to high school, especially during my junior and senior years, I really had a passion for it, for teaching. I realized that I wanted my focus to be specifically on high schoolers because I had some really rough times when I was in high school. I know that my teachers were my backbone. I want to repay that kindness," she said. Mendiola also hopes to teach at the college level one day. "I feel like college professors have such a passion for what they do, and they really are incredible people," she said.

Like many students, Mendiola finances much of her education through grants, loans and scholarships, with some help from her parents. "The last semester, spring of 2021, I definitely was struggling a lot financially. I did a bit of math with it. I realized the only way for me to stay afloat with all of my bills as well as paying for tuition, I would not only have to be a full-time student, but I would have to be a full-time employee."

An A. Montgomery Ward Foundation Scholarship through ACI made a significant difference. "I don't think I would have been able to finish off the semester as strong as I did without the help of this scholarship," she said. "It really saved me. Those who helped fund the scholarship, really did help me a lot."

Away from school, she works on the wait staff at an independent and assisted-living facility for older adults, a job Mendiola says "is fascinating and fun."

Juan Rios-Narciso

Illinois Wesleyan University
ACI General Scholarship



Juan Rios-Narciso is an entrepreneur and business owner who also happens to be a college student majoring in philosophy at Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU). Rios-Narciso, one of three brothers in the family, said his mother, a housekeeper, and his father, a farmhand whom he worked with during summers, dreamed of owning a business. Inspired by their dreams, Rios-Narciso has opened related businesses in Colfax, Illinois: "Azteca Pan," a bakery he operates with this mother, and "Sabor de Mexico" or "Taste of Mexico," a restaurant that serves authentic Mexican food.

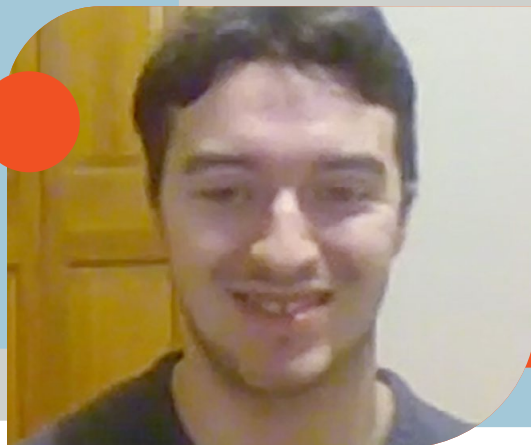
At the bakery, Rios-Narciso and his mother bake Mexican sweetbread. "We'd get it from the stores every week. But now, I don't have to. I can go talk to my mom, and then we'll make bread together. That's really what the bakery is," he said. The restaurant idea is Rios-Narciso's way of preserving traditional Mexican food. "I wanted to try to find a way to preserve Mexican tradition, and of course, preserve my mother's cooking as well. I always said she has the best food. Now, well, I'm going to prove it," Rios-Narciso said.

All of this was happening as he concluded his junior year at IWU. Rios-Narciso was introduced to IWU during a school trip to visit colleges. Soon after starting at IWU, Rios-Narciso focused his many interests on philosophy, political science and entrepreneurship. He's also interested in immigration policy and reform, which is why he also takes political science courses. And after college? "I plan to go to law school with an MBA dual-degree program. Of course, I'll still be running the business," he says. And later, he wants to serve in public office.

Helping to make Rios-Narciso's dreams come true is an ACI General Scholarship. "All of the scholarships and all of the aid I received have been really helpful," he says. "It not only takes the weight off my parents, but also myself. It's definitely helped me in tremendous ways."

Justin DeLeary

Illinois College
McGraw Foundation
Emergency Financial Aid Fund



Justin DeLeary is a history major at Illinois College. He hopes one day to become an archivist for a museum or work at a historical site. His college plans were nearly derailed in late 2019. In the middle of his sophomore year, his mother died of ovarian cancer. That isn't the end of the story, though. With the help of an emergency grant from the McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid Fund through ACI, DeLeary, Midlothian, Illinois, was able to remain in college and continue his education – honoring his mother's wish that he finish college and earn a degree.

DeLeary, an only child, spoke to his maternal grandmother about his future after his mother's passing. "It was either don't go back to school, find a scholarship or you might have to take out a really big loan," he said of the conversation. "So, getting this grant really helped me. I was able to come back to college because of this grant." Also helping DeLeary meet college costs are a few other grants, scholarships and subsidized loans from Illinois College, he said.

DeLeary is the first in his family to attend a four-year college. DeLeary's father and mother briefly attended community college classes, but neither finished, he said. His interest in history stems from writing and research, two things he enjoys, along with an introduction through an eighth grade trip to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. His minor is education.

DeLeary plays on Illinois College's football team, where he is a defensive end. He also spends a lot of time in the school's archives. His dream job would place him in a museum interacting with visitors or teaching young children.

"I just want to say thank you," DeLeary says to ACI donors. "Without that money, I probably wouldn't have been able to go back to school. I know my mother thanks you. I know my grandmother thanks you, and I most definitely thank you. Thanks to the McGraw Emergency Fund, I was able to continue following my dream and graduating college."

Olivia Rill

Elmhurst University
ACI General Scholarship



Olivia Rill grew up surrounded by both firefighters and paramedics. Her father is firefighter and paramedic. Two older brothers followed the same career path. Their influence is one reason she is studying at Elmhurst University for her own medical career in nursing. Another reason Rill chose nursing is a favorite cousin's career as a physician's assistant, she said. Perhaps the most significant reason is rooted in her own family's experience as a foster family. She recalled when she was young, her parents would be asked to foster infant children. They would pick up the children from the hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). "I would beg my mom every time to take me," Rill said. "I got to experience the NICU firsthand and really fell in love with it." She grew up in Chicago with five brothers and sisters, including an older sister and younger brother adopted by her parents.

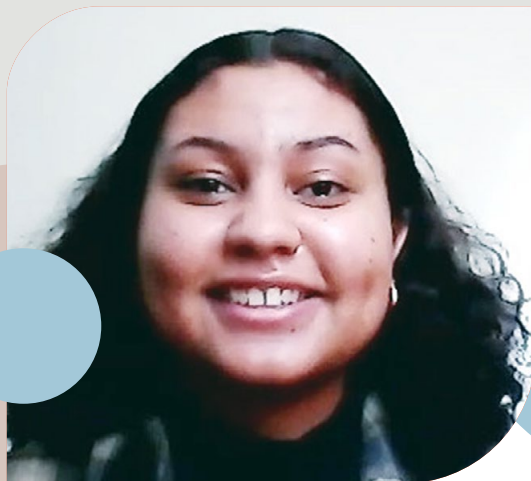
Rill chose Elmhurst because she could join the university's nursing program as a graduating senior in high school. Classes are small, including the nursing classes. Her career goal is to work in a hospital NICU as a nurse, with the possibility of more specialized education later.

Rill wanted to live on campus, which she says helps with her studies and college experience. She finances room and board costs, while her father pays tuition expenses. At Elmhurst, Rill works in the university's financial aid office, where she learned about scholarship opportunities, including the ACI General Scholarship she earned. "It has been challenging to pay for a college education with several family members at home," Rill said. "My Dad works very hard to support our family. I work a lot in between classes and am grateful to contribute. This scholarship has just felt like a breath of fresh air."

She is also thankful for donors who make scholarships for students like hers possible. "It really helps you believe in kind people again when you hear of individuals who will donate their own hard-earned money to benefit other people," she said. Without those funds, she probably couldn't live on campus, and the college costs would be a greater burden to her family.

Mackenzie Coleman

Dominican University
PACCAR Foundation Scholarship



Mackenzie Coleman has a plan for her degree program. Coleman, from St. Louis, wanted to earn both bachelor's and master's degrees in sociology. Dominican University offered students a chance to earn both degrees in five years. For Coleman, it would also make it possible to earn a doctoral degree in a shorter period. That option, plus Dominican's closeness to Chicago and other factors led her to enroll at the River Forest, Illinois, campus. She majors in sociology and Black World Studies, with a minor in social justice and civic engagement. She is the oldest of four children, with three younger brothers.

Coleman has long been interested in social justice and social change. Those interests grew as the Black Lives Matter movement gained renewed attention in 2020. "It really made me think about what I wanted to do and how I wanted to make that impact," she said. She also developed an interest in Black World Studies through a club with the same name. "I decided if I'm really interested in learning about my culture and how I can make positive, impactful change, I wanted to go full force and go with the major," Coleman said.

As for career plans, Coleman wants to work in a school system, helping minority students with accessibility to private schools, and helping ensure their success with tutoring, for example.

As students were enrolling for the 2021 spring semester, things changed for Coleman's family. Her father became unemployed and her mother was changing careers. Coleman learned about the PACCAR Foundation Scholarship through ACI. "The scholarship helped me register for the next semester. Being able to continue going to school here was honestly, a huge factor with that one. It changed a lot for me, so I'm really appreciative for it," she said. "A thousand dollars to some people is not a lot, but for me, it made such a huge difference," Coleman said. "I think the donation is so generous for students like me."

Coleman has earned other scholarships, including a significant scholarship awarded this past summer from the university that helps pay a big piece of her tuition costs, she said. On campus, Coleman is active in student organizations and is a guard on the Dominican women's basketball team, continuing a sport she played all four years of high school.

Danzcel Gerona

Concordia University Chicago
Peer Mentoring program



Danzcel Gerona decided to attend Concordia University Chicago after touring the school with another student, Elizabeth Cyrwus. She liked the idea of small class sizes, meeting regularly with professors and being close to the Chicago's downtown. Since she arrived on campus, Gerona said ACI's Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) has enhanced her college experience. It also led to a job as a resident assistant (RA), something she might not have known about otherwise.

A first-generation student from Bartlett, Illinois, Gerona says her PMP mentor, Lily, told her she could live in a campus dormitory campus and earn a salary as a RA. Since August, Gerona has been a RA at Concordia, working mostly with first-year students and sharing her college experience. Gerona is a nursing major. She has an aunt and uncle who are nurses, and she was able to "shadow" her aunt, who is a wound nurse, on the job. "I knew from a young age that I want to be part of the health care field. It wasn't until I was actually able to go to her job and see what she does for me to confirm that I actually want to be a part of the health care system." Gerona is focused on becoming an emergency room nurse, and possibly a travel nurse. She may return to school to become a nurse anesthetist. Gerona joined ACI's Peer Mentoring Program at Concordia. During her first year, her mentor, Lily, met with her two or three times a month. "She would also just be there as a friend to check up on me and make sure I was doing OK with my classes," Gerona said. Her mentor told her about the RA job and applying for scholarships.

At some future time, Gerona said she'd like to be a mentor in the Peer Mentoring Program. For now, she mentors first-year students in her role as a RA. "I feel like being part of the mentor program has helped me tell them information they might need to know," she said. "A lot of them don't know the benefits of being on campus, so I feel I can give them that opportunity." Gerona is also grateful for donors who make the Peer Mentoring Program possible at her school and 11 other ACI-member colleges and universities. "I would tell them I really appreciate their contribution. It's helping me get to where I want to be in the future. They're helping move my career."

At Concordia, Gerona is member of the university's cross country team, a sport she continued from high school, and the university's tennis team, in addition to other activities.

Tania Huerta Chagoyan

Aurora University
ACI General Scholarship



Tania Huerta Chagoyan of Streamwood, Illinois, remembers the nurses who helped her through health-related issues when she was growing up. That is one reason that Huerta Chagoyan chose nursing as her major at nearby Aurora University. "I want to help the kids that were like me growing up having a lot of health issues," she said.

A bilingual student in Spanish and English, Huerta Chagoyan said she also chose Aurora because of its small classes and close-knit community. Plus, the university's nursing program has a good reputation, with a high student passing rate on the National Council Licensure Examination, the standard for nursing licensure.

2020 was a difficult year for her. "Because of Covid, I lost my job. I was working as a server, and all restaurants were shut down. I didn't know how I was going to pay for school. I saw my financial award letter, and I owed a pretty significant amount for this upcoming year. I started getting really worried," she said. Huerta Chagoyan's parents help with living expenses, but much of the responsibility for college tuition falls on her.

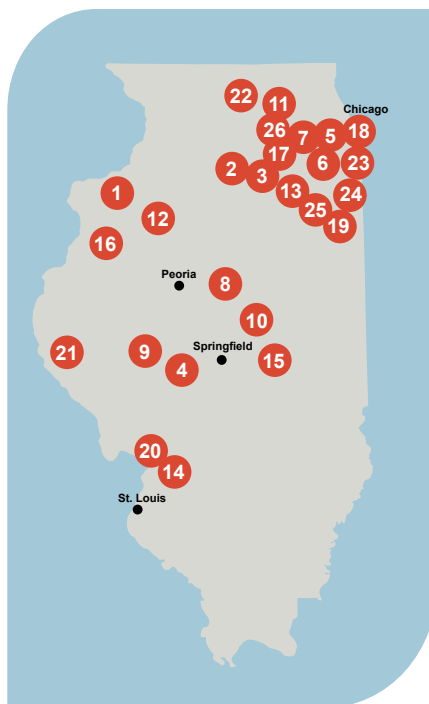
She was awarded an ACI General Scholarship, along with other scholarships. "It really helped me because I knew that I wasn't going to be as financially strained, but also I could focus more on my education," Huerta Chagoyan said.

This year, her fortunes changed. She's working as a receptionist in the health-care clinic, setting up appointments and dealing with paperwork. "I like it a lot just because I get more of a feel of what it's like to be in health care," she said. In the future, Chagoyan hopes to attend graduate school and possibly become a nurse practitioner.

Huerta Chagoyan is grateful for donors who make scholarships, such as her ACI scholarship, possible. "Thanks to them and their help, they help students like me continue in their college education uninterrupted and being able to really focus on their educational goal and being able to accomplish that," she says.

Member Colleges and Universities

**ACI is a collaboration
of 26 independent,
nonprofit,
residential colleges
and universities
throughout Illinois.**



1. Augustana College, Rock Island
2. Aurora University, Aurora
3. Benedictine University, Lisle
4. Blackburn College, Carlinville
5. Concordia University Chicago, River Forest
6. Dominican University, River Forest
7. Elmhurst University, Elmhurst
8. Eureka College, Eureka
9. Illinois College, Jacksonville
10. Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington
11. Judson University, Elgin
12. Knox College, Galesburg
13. Lewis University, Romeoville
14. McKendree University, Lebanon
15. Millikin University, Decatur
16. Monmouth College, Monmouth
17. North Central College, Naperville
18. North Park University, Chicago
19. Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais
20. Principia College, Elsau
21. Quincy University, Quincy
22. Rockford University, Rockford
23. Saint Xavier University, Chicago
24. Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights
25. University of St. Francis, Joliet
26. Wheaton College, Wheaton

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A large graphic on the left side of the page. It features a large orange shape that resembles a stylized letter 'C' or a partial circle. Inside this orange shape, the text 'ACI Programs' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font. The orange shape is set against a background of light blue and grey geometric shapes, including a large grey semi-circle and several blue and grey rectangular blocks.

ACI Programs

College to Career

ACI's College-to-Career Program reflects an emphasis on supporting students preparing to transition to careers and matching employers with talent emerging from ACI member colleges and universities. This effort addresses preparing students for future employment by building critical life skills, identifying career opportunities, networking with employers and securing rewarding positions. It includes:

- **Career Fair and Employer Expo:** This day-long talent and career development event is an online event.
- **Work and Life Skills Boot Camps:** Boot camps help equip students to meet employers' expectations and build rewarding lives and careers. These sessions help students with job searches, networking, interviewing and workplace performance, as well as managing personal finances. Initial funding for this program was provided by a First Opportunity Partners grant from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) with support from the UPS Foundation.
- **Career Leaders:** To be launched in fall 2022, this collaborative program is designed to provide underserved, high-achieving college seniors with a year of comprehensive training and support in developing business, social and leadership skills to help secure entry-level positions leading to meaningful careers. The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), Washington, D.C. committed \$18,000 to help fund ACI's Career Leaders Program. Funds were provided through a First Opportunity Partners grant from CIC, with support from the UPS Foundation, contingent upon ACI raising additional funds.

- **Career Mentoring:** With our partner, Mentoring Complete, seniors at member institutions develop mentoring relationships with successful business professionals who help guide them through the basics of business etiquette and other key success factors. Initial funding for this program was provided by a National Venture Fund grant from the CIC.

- **Micro-Internships:** These short-term, paid, professional assignments through ACI's partner, Parker Dewey, take place throughout the year and involve five to 40 hours of work. Students gain opportunities to demonstrate skills, explore career paths and build networks. Employers connect to a skilled and diverse talent pool, improve the effectiveness of hiring efforts and lower the costs associated with integrating new employees into their organizations.

Emergency Financial Aid Program

ACI meets the financial needs of students facing unanticipated hardships that can disrupt their academic studies. This aid, through the McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid Fund, enables students from low-to-moderate-income families the opportunity to continue their studies without interruption.

Peer Mentoring Program

ACI increases the number of underserved college students who remain in school, succeed and graduate from ACI member colleges and universities. The program matches underserved first-year students with trained peer mentors from similar backgrounds who guide them through the critical first year at college. The retention rate for students participating in the Peer Mentoring Program is as high as 97 percent. ACI's Peer Mentoring Program operates on 12 member campuses, including Augustana College, Blackburn College, Concordia University Chicago, Dominican University, Eureka College, Illinois College, Millikin University, Monmouth College, North Central College, North Park University, Quincy University and Rockford University. The program serves a total of 156 students, including 130 mentees and 26 mentors. Support is provided by the Siragusa Family Foundation, BNSF Railway Foundation, ITW Foundation and one foundation that wishes to remain anonymous.

Professional Development Program

ACI provides professional development opportunities to member college and university staff through twice-yearly conferences serving four special interest groups: advancement, finance, public relations and marketing, and student engagement. Combined, 399 people attended ACI professional-development conferences in 2020-2021.

Scholarship Program

ACI supports underserved students attending member colleges and universities. In the 2020-2021 academic year, ACI provided scholarships to members schools that helped 330 students with \$581,440 in scholarships.

Financial Information for June 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021

Financial information is presented for ACI's fiscal year ending May 31, 2021. Desmond & Ahern, Ltd., Certified Public Accountants, issued ACI an unmodified opinion on the financial statements.

As of May 31, total assets were \$1,379,579, while liabilities were \$491,538. Total net Assets were \$888,041. Gifts, awards and other services totaling \$784,560 were distributed to members.

Abbreviated Statement of Financial Position

Assets

Cash	\$577,219
Accounts Receivable	18,000
Investments	568,603
Property and equipment (net)	3,536
Other assets	<u>212,221</u>
Total assets	\$1,379,579

Liabilities

Scholarships and other distributions	\$451,440
Other liabilities	40,098
Net assets	<u>888,041</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	\$1,379,579

Abbreviated Statement of Activities

Support and revenue

Member assessments	\$505,193
Contributions	572,490
Corporate partnerships	50,500
Investment income (net)	94,679
Other income	<u>79,454</u>
Total support and revenue	\$1,302,316

Expenses

Gifts, awards and other services to members	\$784,560
Other programs	145,287
Management and general	211,065
Fundraising	<u>291,225</u>
Total expenses	1,432,137
Change in net assets	\$(129,821)

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Memorable words

"It (the pandemic of 2020) was a fantastic time to show whether you had learning agility, critical thinking skills, the willingness to adapt, and also the willingness to think about the future in entirely different ways than maybe you had envisioned."

Kunal Kapoor

CEO, Morningstar, Inc., and graduate of
Monmouth College

"ACI should be commended for their dedication to help fulfill gaps to make college attainable. The work that ACI is doing across the state is critical."

Michael Frerichs

Illinois Treasurer

"When that grant came in, I just sat at the computer in shock. This is the hope that I was praying for. In that moment, I was like, 'my life has been changed.' It really has been a blessing."

Mia Pitts-Hope

Wheaton College

McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid recipient

"Coming from a low-income, minority, immigrant family, it really is hard to get the funds to go to college. It means so much just to be able to return this year and be able to be here right now. I really can't emphasize enough the impact it has made on me and my family. It's a blessing."

Aileen Duran

University of St. Francis

ACI General Scholarship recipient

"I'd be struggling if it weren't for the mentors that I had in this Peer Mentoring Program. They genuinely helped me. It's been touching my heart deeply, deep in my heart, that there are good people out there helping students, helping me and encouraging me, inspiring me to help others as well."

Elie Imani

North Central College

ACI Peer Mentoring Program participant

"Without that money, I probably wouldn't have been able to go back to school. I know my (late) mother thanks you. I know my grandmother thanks you, and I most definitely thank you. Thanks to the McGraw Emergency Fund, I was able to continue following my dream and graduating college."

Justin DeLeary

Illinois College

McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial
Aid recipient



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