



# ACI Reporter

**May - June 2018**

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## **ACI Annual Benefit Reception Raises More Than \$90,000 for Peer Mentoring Program, Honors ACI Member Colleges and Universities**



Associated Colleges of Illinois' (ACI) [2018 Annual Benefit Reception](#) raised important resources for its [Peer Mentoring Program](#) at its April 20 Benefit Reception at the University Club of Chicago. More than 160 ACI supporters and friends attended the event, which encouraged attendees to support underserved students at [ACI's 25 colleges and universities](#).

ACI's Peer Mentoring Program is designed to help keep students in college and improve graduation rates among low-income, first-generation and students of color at ACI institutions. Selected students are matched with trained peer mentors recruited from upper classmen of similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Mentors help mentees navigate the critical first year of college, boosting their chances of remaining in college through graduation. This year, the Peer Mentoring Program has served 132 students, including 110 mentees and 22 mentors on nine ACI member campuses.

The reception raised more than \$90,000 for peer mentoring, and a matching grant from the Council of Independent Colleges' First Opportunity Partners Grant Program will add another \$32,000. ACI continues to raise funds for the operating costs required to fund the program at up to 11 member campuses in 2018-19.

### **Students' compelling testimonies were evening's highlights**

Peer mentors from two ACI member universities told dramatic stories of their experiences. [Stephen Taylor](#), right, of [Rockford University](#) told the audience he grew up on Chicago's west side, wanted to go to college and jumped at a chance to play football at Rockford. But Taylor said "negative habits" led to his flunking out his first semester in college. "I was missing three things: A goalpost, a motivator and motivation," he said.

Taylor credited his mother and Dr. Karen Walker, director, Office of Student Success and Retention, Rockford University, for motivating and helping him successfully return to school. He got involved in ACI's Peer Mentoring Program at Rockford, designed specifically for minority males. Taylor described his role as "a guide and a motivator," he



said. "If I would have had a mentor ... or had a program around that would have provided me those resources in that community, I wouldn't have failed out my first semester," Taylor said. "Please – if your donations will help someone else like me finish and reach college completion, I say donate."

[Megan Jaboor](#), right, a peer mentor and nursing major at [Quincy University](#), said in her role as mentor, she has met regularly with five students and learned their stories. "I found my purpose as a mentor to be there for them," she said. "Some of my mentees do not have family support or anyone who has gone to college. Some have financial issues and others struggle with city life." College is challenging, and ACI's program offers personal support to participants, she said. Jaboor helped one nursing major/mentee study for an exam and talked with her about her sick grandfather. When the mentee passed the test, Jaboor said, "I couldn't have been more proud. Knowing that I was the first person she called meant a lot."

Jaboor reminded the audience that many more students at Quincy could use extra help and motivation to succeed. "ACI has changed the lives of many, but most important, it taught me that with the right kind of coaching and determination, you can accomplish anything," Jaboor added.



### Speakers encourage mentoring and financial support for ACI Peer Mentoring Program



Keynote speaker [Ana Dutra](#), CEO, The Executives' Club of Chicago, said she was fortunate to have mentors throughout her career, including "unexpected mentors" who helped her and her husband when they emigrated from her native Brazil to the United States. She urged students who benefit from the help of mentors to "pay it forward."

"For all the great advice you receive, for somebody who plays a role in your life, you have the responsibility ... to advise somebody else," Dutra said. "Mentoring is a two-way street. I've never had a mentoring relationship when I was a mentor or the mentee, when I was not giving and receiving at the same time."

[Dr. Jamel SC Wright](#), president of [Eureka College](#), was a first-generation college student. Mentoring relationships and encouragement were important in her college experience. Nearly two-thirds of the student body at Eureka College is first generation, many needing financial support while they study and seek opportunities for career learning, she said.

"Please continue to offer our students opportunities to intern with your companies. Offer them mentorship opportunities," Wright told the attendees. "If we are not committed, if we don't recommit constantly to events like this through associations like ACI, we will find ourselves farther and farther behind in the global context."

[Terri Diggs Norman](#), ACI Board of Trustees member, AT&T sales center vice president and a first-generation graduate, asked attendees to share stories or photos about ACI's Peer Mentoring Program on social media. "Ask your friends to support ... the ACI Peer Mentoring Program," she said. Her husband, Art Norman, special contributor, NBC5 News, Chicago, said he needed mentors when he was a first-generation college student. He urged Benefit Reception attendees to reach out to help underserved college students. "All they need is a nudge. A push. A kind word," he said.

Financial support for the 2018 ACI Benefit Reception was provided by Patrons (\$10,000 each) Gallagher and Husch Blackwell. Partners (\$5,000 each) were Aon, Baker Tilly, GROWMARK, Robbins Schwartz and UPS. Door prizes were provided by Chicago Sinfonietta, Chicago Sky, The Executives' Club of Chicago and Shedd Aquarium.

The next ACI Benefit Reception is Friday, April 12, 2019, at the University Club of Chicago.

## ACI Scholars

**Jada Sims**  
**University of St. Francis**  
**ACI General Scholarship**

[Watch Jada tell her story!](#)

**"It (ACI General Scholarship) helped me have to work less and focus more on school. Especially now with more demand on my nursing classes, I can focus on that more and not have to worry about working to make tuition."**

Jada Sims once witnessed something in a hospital situation that inspired her to become a nurse.

"I had a family member who was in the hospital, and I noticed a communication barrier between the patients' family and the health care professionals," she says. "I want to be able to fix that communication barrier. And, I like being around people and helping them during a difficult time in their life and being there as a support for them."

Sims, a first-generation college student from Romeoville, is completing her sophomore year at the [University of St. Francis](#) (USF) in Joliet. She chose to attend nearby USF because she liked the small class sizes and that she was known and appreciated as a USF student. She also appreciates the university's liberal arts curriculum and has been introduced to many new ideas and disciplines. "I found that having a liberal arts education helps me to think about later on in my life," she says, adding that it helps to "understand multiple things and not just one specific thing."



Through a campus organization for first-generation students, University Success Scholars, Sims learned about ACI scholarships. Her ACI General Scholarship helps her stay focused on the rigorous nursing curriculum. "It helped me have to work less and focus more on school. Especially now with more demand on my nursing classes, I can focus on that more and not have to worry about working to make tuition," Sims says. Sims has an older sister and lives with her mother, who is retired.

For a minor, Sims chose psychology. "I like the brain and how it works, so getting to understand how people function and how they are, I think, is what attracted me to psychology," she says.

At USF, Sims is a member of the Augustus Tolton Society, dedicated to nurturing intellectual ability, promoting leadership and service development, and fostering self-knowledge among USF's students of African descent. She also works at an after-school program with elementary school-age students three days a week, helping with homework, playing games and leading other activities.

After college, Sims plans to work, probably in a hospital setting, and then return to school to get a graduate degree or certification that leads to becoming a nursing instructor or a nurse practitioner.

## **Cristan Newton** **Rockford University** **CIC/UPS Scholarship**

[Watch Cristan tell his story!](#)

**"When I was selected for the UPS scholarship, my first thought was, 'Wow. That takes the weight off my shoulders.' It is the difference between borrowing a book for the semester or just not having a book."**



Cristan Newton knew in high school that he wanted to be an IT specialist, the person who helps solve computer problems. His longtime interest in computers and technology led to a major in computer science at [Rockford University](#), with a concentration in cybersecurity and a minor in business administration. Newton, from Shreveport, Louisiana, is a senior.

Newton came to Rockford at the suggestion of a friend who enrolled in the university's theater program. While at Rockford, Newton has been a member of the university's track and cross-country teams, and helped start an archery club. He is a resident assistant and has served in roles such as president of the Student Government Association and Black Student Union.

He's also a reservist in the U.S. Marine Corps. This summer, Newton will finish the second increment of Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia, and when he graduates later this year, he will accept a commission as an officer and go on active duty working in cyberwarfare. "I have a great interest in cybersecurity and hacking, and cyberwarfare is something I've wanted to do. It's a very demanding field, and it's very selective, Newton says. "I also knew I would eventually want to serve my country. I didn't know which branch, but I knew I wanted a challenge, and the Marine Corps presented the greatest challenge to me. I've been extremely blessed to be on the path that I'm on." After the Marines, Newton hopes to continue in the cybersecurity field, working as private sector consultant or in civilian government service.

Newton is the recipient of an CIC/UPS Scholarship from Rockford University through ACI. While the Marines pay for some college costs, Newton, one of five children, pays the rest himself and the scholarship is a significant help. "I'm an

independent student," he says. "If I didn't find the funding, then I'd have to find another place to live and place to work somewhere. When I was selected for the UPS scholarship, my first thought was, 'Wow. That takes the weight off my shoulders.' It is the difference between borrowing a book for the semester or just not having a book. It's been extremely helpful and beneficial receiving that scholarship."

Newton adds that he is grateful for donors who provide scholarships. "Their continued support allows students to do great things," Newton adds.

## Meet ACI Members

### Wheaton College: 'A Strong Commitment to Christian Discipleship and the Life of the Mind'

#### ACI member Wheaton enjoys national profile

When [Dr. Philip G. Ryken](#), right, was being considered in 2010 for the role of president of [Wheaton College](#), a prominent, national Christian evangelical institution, he remembers telling the board of trustees his perspective about the job. "I told the trustees the only college president I could be is somebody who viewed this as a form of pastoral ministry," he says. "I think most college presidents would say there is an aspect of their work which is pastoral." It's also a calling, a way of life, Ryken says. Ryken came to Wheaton after serving 15 years as pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, where he learned about being chief executive of an institution and chief caregiver for a community of people.

Today, Ryken continues his pastoral ministry as Wheaton's president. He is a regular preacher in Wheaton College chapel services and other public venues, while leading and managing the college, and its many assets.

Read the [full story](#).



## ACI News

### ACI Professional Development Conferences Happening in June

In the coming days, ACI will host a multi-track professional development conference at Illinois College, Jacksonville, and cohost an event for communications, marketing and public relations staff at Augustana College, Rock Island.

Illinois College is the site for a conference on Friday, June 1, for college professionals in advancement, finance and student engagement. At least 70 attendees are expected. Registration closed May 25, however, ACI board members, corporate partners and member college and university staff may register at the site. Click [here](#) for program details.

For communicators, ACI is partnering with Augustana College's Summer Get-Together on Tuesday, June 19. More than 100 communicators are expected, primarily from Illinois and Iowa colleges and universities. Click [here](#) for program details and registration.



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### 25 Members and Growing: Saint Xavier University Rejoins ACI

[Saint Xavier University](#), founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in 1846, officially rejoins ACI June 1. The ACI Board of Trustees approved the university's application for admission at the trustees' annual meeting in April. Saint Xavier is led by [President Laurie M. Joyner](#), and it is ACI's 25<sup>th</sup> member higher education institution.

Saint Xavier was previously an ACI member until 2002. Addressing the board, Dr. Avis Clendenen, emeritus professor of religion and special assistant to the president, said Saint Xavier is the oldest Catholic university in Chicago, serving 3,900 undergraduate and graduate students. Nursing and speech pathology are signature programs, and it is a Hispanic-



serving institution. Its original purpose was to educate immigrants, and today, it continues to serve a significant first-generation student population.

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## ACI Board Elects New Leaders, Approves Budget, Business Plan

The [ACI Board of Trustees](#) elected Dr. Jamel SC Wright, left, to serve a two-year term as president of ACI. Wright, who is president of [Eureka College](#), Eureka, succeeded Dr. Barbara A. Farley, who served two terms as ACI president. Farley is president of [Illinois College](#), Jacksonville.



The board made two additional appointments to the ACI Executive Committee. Succeeding Dr. John L. Comerford as member at large is Dr. Gene C. Crume, Jr., center, president of [Judson University](#), Elgin. Comerford recently left as president of [Blackburn College](#), Carlinville, to become president of Otterbein University, Westerville, Ohio. Succeeding Wright as a member at large is Dr. Eric W. Fulcomer, right, president of [Rockford University](#), Rockford. Each new appointment is effective June 1.

With these new appointments, the nine members of the ACI Executive Committee for the next two fiscal years are:

- Chair, Board of Trustees: Frank Cella
- President: Jamel SC Wright
- Secretary-Treasurer: Clifton Fenton
- Chair, Advancement Committee: Bill Powell
- Chair, Audit and Investment Committee: Clifton Fenton
- Chair, Program Committee: Lyn Bulman
- Chair, Trusteeship Committee: Jerry Murphy
- Member at Large: Gene Crume, Jr.
- Member at Large: Eric Fulcomer
- Member at Large: Chip Nyambuya

### Board OKs budget, business plan, hears report from executive director

The ACI Board of Trustees approved a business plan and \$1.58 million budget for fiscal year 2018-2019, and it approved a series of minor revisions to the ACI Bylaws.

In his report to the board, ACI Executive Director Mick Weltman said the organization achieved more than 25 of its objectives in its business plan for 2017-2018. For the coming year he said the organization wants to return 140 percent of its assessments to member colleges in scholarships, and it wants to approve up to 11 member campuses for its Peer Mentoring Program. A multi-track professional development conference to be held in Chicago is planned for Nov. 2, along with breakfast meetings with wealth advisors and human resources, diversity and inclusion staff.

ACI will continue to build [job and internship opportunities](#) for students and micro-internships through Parker Dewey, Weltman said. Foundation gifts to ACI exceeded expectations in 2017-2018. ACI plans to raise more funds through corporations and individuals, plus a major gifts program has been initiated. Ten new corporate members were added to the board of trustees this fiscal year. ACI is also planning for its second [Career and Internship Fair](#) in fall 2019, he added.

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## ACI Welcomes Tony Oommen as Corporate Board Member

At its April 20 meeting, the ACI Board of Trustees elected [Tony M. Oommen](#) as a corporate board member.

Oommen is vice president and charitable planning consultant for Fidelity Charitable, Chicago. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1993 and has been a Certified Financial Planner

since 2004. He is an active member of the Chicago Estate Planning Council and the Chicago Council on Planned Giving.

With Oommen's appointment, there are 36 corporate members of the ACI Board of Trustees, along with the presidents of 25 ACI member colleges and universities.



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## Peer Mentoring Program Applications Available Through June 22

ACI member colleges and universities have until Friday, June 22, to apply to host [Peer Mentoring Program](#) teams. Up to two campuses will be selected by June 29 to join the institutions already hosting ACI's Peer Mentoring Program. Each new campus will receive funds to host two teams of five mentees and one mentor, engaging a total of 24 students on the two campuses.

In 2017-18, ACI's Peer Mentoring Program served 132 students on nine campuses. Data documenting the results of the program through June 2018 will be available in the next 30 days, with data documenting spring-to-fall retention of 2017-18 freshmen mentees available in late fall 2018.

The Peer Mentoring Program application was distributed in mid-May to more than 50 individuals at 16 ACI campuses not currently hosting mentor-mentee teams. Faculty and staff at ACI colleges and universities who did not receive the request for proposal and are interested in applying for the program should contact Director of Special Projects Leslie Millenson at [lmillenson@acifund.org](mailto:lmillenson@acifund.org).

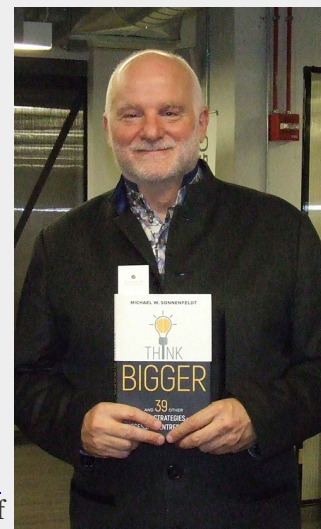
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## ACI Sponsors Entrepreneur, Author, TIGER 21 Leader Michael W. Sonnenfeldt

A serial entrepreneur, author, chairman and founder of a members-only group of successful entrepreneurs who collectively manage more than \$60 billion in personal assets, met with about 30 students representing nine ACI colleges and universities May 8. [Michael W. Sonnenfeldt](#) discussed some key findings from his recent book, *Think Bigger: A Look at What It Takes to be a Successful Entrepreneur* with the students who met Sonnenfeldt at 1871, Chicago's technology and innovation center.

His book is a collection of stories and insights from members of the [TIGER 21](#) (The Investment Group for Enhanced Results for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century), the entrepreneurial group he founded and chairs. Sonnenfeldt shared several insights of successful entrepreneurs with the students: knowing yourself and your limits; working with business partners; persistence to reach entrepreneurial goals; the importance of mentors; and focusing on your own abilities, the needs and abilities of your team and what's happening in the world that may affect your business.

Among those who attended the 1871 session were President Kurt D. Dykstra of [Trinity Christian College](#), who introduced Sonnenfeldt, and President Gene C. Crume, Jr., of [Judson University](#). Sonnenfeldt also addressed about 70 people who attended an Executives' Club of Chicago luncheon, sponsored by ACI, and he attended an evening reception at the University Club of Chicago with ACI board members, plus members and prospective members of TIGER 21.



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## ACI Awarded CIC Grant for TIGER 21 Program and Individual Gifts Program



[The Council of Independent Colleges \(CIC\)](#), Washington, awarded ACI a \$18,125 grant to fund two initiatives: to support entrepreneur and author Michael W. Sonnenfeldt's May 8 visit to Chicago (see previous story) and to develop a significant fundraising program, led by the Chicago-based firm of Nike B. Whitcomb Associates.

"We were delighted to be awarded this grant by CIC to help us bring Michael Sonnenfeldt here and to develop a much-needed major gifts program," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "We are especially interested in new initiatives to raise funds to support ACI's member colleges and universities, a critical part of our mission."

As part of the CIC grant, ACI engaged Nike B. Whitcomb Associates to craft and begin implementation of an individual major gifts program. Whitcomb's work includes an analysis of current donations to ACI, an analysis of the potential for gifts from individuals by industry, as well as messaging to reach and engage new individual donors.

The award is part of CIC's Capacity-Building Grants Program to help state councils, such as ACI, acquire expertise and resources needed to advance the needs of private higher education. The grants provide for materials, consultants, software and research that fundraisers and marketers need.

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## Jobs and Internship Listings, Micro-Internships Available Through ACI Website

Employers: Let ACI help you find staff and interns to help you build your talent pipeline!

ACI is posting jobs and internships on the ACI website that will be seen by many of the 70,000 students ACI serves at 25 member colleges and universities. Posting a job or internship is easy -- visit ACI's [website](#), complete the form we've provided for employers, send us your company logo, and we'll post the announcement for free.



In addition, ACI has partnered with [Parker Dewey](#) to provide [paid micro-internships](#) for college students and recent grads. These micro-internships are a great way to gain professional experience through short-term, paid assignments.

Questions about ACI's Jobs and Internships webpage should be directed to ACI Executive Director Mick Weltman at [mweltman@acifund.org](mailto:mweltman@acifund.org) or by calling 312-263-2391, ext. 0523.

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## Did You Know?

### Five IT Security Best Practices to Strengthen Your University Cybersecurity From Sikich, an ACI corporate partner

Over the 2017 winter holidays, a thief made the headlines. It didn't matter that generous volunteers dressed up as Santa Claus and stood in the freezing Chicago cold beside their red bucket asking for donations. All that mattered was that the chime of their bells signified cash donations, marking the thief's next target. Someone was stealing thousands of dollars in donations by simply grabbing the buckets filled with donations when "Santa Claus" wasn't looking. What went wrong? Simple. Defenses were down, and volunteers weren't prepared.



Read the [full story](#).

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### Make a Tax-Deductible Gift to Support ACI Programs

Your gift to ACI can help provide scholarships to underserved students or provide support for peer mentoring for low-income, first-generation college students at ACI-affiliated colleges and universities. Financial gifts are tax deductible as provided by law.

To provide financial support for ACI Scholarship and Peer Mentoring Programs, please visit the ACI [website](#) or contact Mick Weltman, ACI executive director, at 312-263-2391, ext. 0523 or [mweltman@acifund.org](mailto:mweltman@acifund.org).

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Judson University - Knox College - Lewis University - McKendree University - Millikin University  
Monmouth College - North Central College - North Park University - Olivet Nazarene University  
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