

ACI Reporter

October - November 2019

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ACI's First Work and Life Skills Boot Camp is Saturday, Nov. 9, at Concordia University Chicago



ACI launches its [Work and Life Skills Boot Camp](#) series on Saturday, Nov. 9, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at [Concordia University Chicago](#), River Forest. Targeted to low-income, first-generation and students of color at [ACI member colleges and universities](#), ACI's Work and Life Skills Boot Camps seek to enhance career development opportunities for these students and help level the field when they enter the job market.

The Nov. 9 boot camp's theme is "Who Do I Want to Be? How Do I Get There?" The day's curriculum explores how liberal arts education can lead to a career path, how to choose courses, work assignments and extracurricular activities that can boost marketability once students graduate, and how to write effective resumes, with support from Upkey's proprietary system. Students also will hear stories from first-generation college graduates -- now early- to mid-career -- about how they found their way to rewarding lives and careers. The day will conclude with a financial literacy session on building credit, provided by Wells Fargo.

ACI is working with career development professionals, multicultural directors and [Peer Mentoring Program](#) Campus Coordinators to select students to attend the boot camps. "Our Boot Camps equip these students with the skills they'll need to apply for and succeed at first jobs," says ACI Executive Director Mick Weltman. "The curriculum also addresses skills for effective daily living through a series of financial literacy sessions."

ACI's Work and Life Skills Boot Camps are funded through a [First Opportunity Partners grant](#) from the [Council of Independent Colleges](#) with support from the UPS Foundation, along with matching funds raised by ACI. Faculty for the Nov. 9 boot camp includes Nancy Arnesen, PhD, professor of English, North Park University; Joan Henehan, senior director of student leadership and involvement, Concordia University Chicago; Kirstyn Kroll, partnership and relationship manager, Upkey; and Teri Wilson, assistant vice president and Wells Fargo At Work senior program manager, Wells Fargo.

A panel of mid-career professionals will include Evelyn Aucutt, assistant director of academic success, North Park University; Kathy Gebhardt, assistant vice president of student life/acting dean of students, Concordia University Chicago; Marisol Gonzalez Castillo, staff attorney, Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee; and ACI Board of Trustees members Barry C. Mastin, Jr., construction underwriting consultant, Liberty Mutual Insurance Co., and J. Vincent Williams, vice president, economic empowerment, YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago.

ACI plans to hold two additional boot camps in 2020. The February session will be built on interviewing skills and personal presentation considerations, and the April session will address technology and the workplace. Like the November session, the remaining boot camps will include a financial literacy component.

Opportunities are available to sponsor ACI's Work and Life Skills Boot Camps, to participate in curriculum development and serve as faculty for future sessions. For more information, contact Mick Weltman at 312-263-2391, ext. 1, or write to mweltman@acifund.org.

ACI HR, Diversity and Inclusion Leaders' Breakfast Nov. 7, Focuses on Student Career Preparation, Employer Needs

With the theme, "Preparing Students for Outstanding Careers with Your Firm," company human resources, diversity and inclusion leaders will discuss student career preparation and employer needs at a complimentary breakfast meeting hosted by ACI, Nov. 7, at the University Club of Chicago's Madison Room, 76 E. Monroe St. Deans and provosts from ACI member colleges and universities will lead table discussions.

The event, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., is the third annual [ACI HR, Diversity and Inclusion Leaders' Breakfast](#). These meetings offer company and college leaders opportunities to discuss workplace topics that benefit college students and the employers.



[President Mary K. Surridge, North Park University](#), Chicago, will introduce the program, to be led by [Renee Tucker Martinez](#), career education specialist at the university.

ACI has developed several career-related initiatives, including an annual Career Development Conference and Employer Expo, and Work and Life Skills Boot Camps. In addition, ACI has also compiled [employment data](#) that shows more than 23,000 alumni from member schools working at 145 top employers in Illinois.

ACI's Fall Conference is this Friday in Lisle, Illinois!



ACI's Fall Conference this Friday, Nov. 1, is expected to draw about 170 people from member college and university staff throughout Illinois, said Constance Willoughby, ACI director of conferences and scholarships. The conference is a professional development conference which meets in the Chicago area every fall. Online registration closed Oct. 25.

The conference keynote speaker is [Dr. S. Georgia Nugent](#), interim president, [Illinois Wesleyan University](#), Bloomington. The topic of her remarks is "The Enduring Value of the Liberal Arts." President [Charles W. Gregory](#), [Benedictine University](#), Lisle, will welcome conference participants.

Participants will attend learning sessions in four individual tracks, including advancement, finance, public relations and marketing, and student engagement. Speakers are from industry as well as ACI's 26 member colleges and universities.

The conference is at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, 3003 Corporate West Dr., in Lisle, southwest of Chicago. Major sponsor is [BKD CPAs and Advisors](#).

ACI Scholars

Roberto Jordan Concordia University Chicago ACI Peer Mentoring Program

[Watch Roberto tell his story!](#)

Roberto Jordan went to a large high school in his hometown of Lockport, Illinois. For college, what appealed to him was a smaller, more diverse school. After a visit to [Concordia University Chicago](#), Jordan was sold. He liked the Christian environment and the idea of personally knowing many of students attending the university. "Nobody is really a stranger here," he says.

A business management major, Jordan joined ACI's Peer Mentoring Program at Concordia at the suggestion of his resident advisor. He has learned how a mentor can help a first-generation college student. Plus, his mentor, Jorge Palacios, was a business management major. "I'm starting to understand how the whole process works from going from college undergraduate to being in the workforce," Jordan says. "He's filled in the blanks for me. That's probably the biggest benefit I could ask for – knowing how that process works, and it's assuring to me that I have a place to make it in the workforce one day."

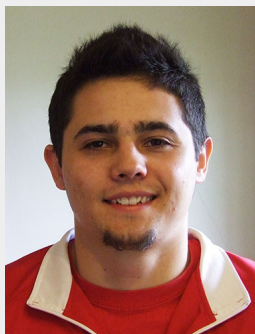
For Jordan, the Peer Mentoring Program has also made it possible for him to have funds to buy books or other needed supplies, taught him about preparing to enter the workforce, and he's made many friends and connections through the program. He's grateful to his parents, who made it possible for Jordan, his brother and sister to be successful in high school and college. "I'm really thankful for what they've done for us because they've sacrificed a lot for us to have this opportunity," he says.

Jordan wants potential donors to know that the Peer Mentoring Program has made a big difference for him going from high school to living on his own as a college student. "I feel like I've really been assisted, and I feel much more comfortable now about my studies and my future," he adds.



Brandon Skovronski Monmouth College ACI General Scholarship

[Watch Brandon tell his story!](#)



Brandon Skovronski transferred to [Monmouth College](#), Monmouth, Illinois, because he knew the school had a great reputation and he had a chance to play on the school's baseball team. Unfortunately, Skovronski had some health issues that prevented him from playing this past school year, but he hopes to play again.

From nearby Aledo, Illinois, Skovronski says he was originally a biology major. Now a kinesiology major, Skovronski is focused on becoming a physical therapist and hopes to attend PT school after Monmouth College.

"I love sports medicine, so I would want to be a sports medicine-physical therapy person," he says. "Probably more like an athletic trainer or a team doctor." Skovronski knows people who are physical therapists working in sports medicine, plus he's experienced physical therapy firsthand through his sports career. "Being exposed to it a lot makes me understand why I like it so much and why I want to keep going forward with it," he says.

Skovronski is the recipient of an ACI General Scholarship, which helps him and his family meet tuition costs. His father pays tuition and other expenses. "With the medical issues we've had, we've had bills to pay and school bills were racking up," Skovronski says. "There was a point where I was almost actually financially dismissed from the institution, because we didn't have the funds."

The ACI scholarship was significant, he says. "When I was told about the scholarship, it actually made the difference. Without the scholarship, we still wouldn't have it paid off as much as we do. So, the scholarship actually saved me. It's honestly changed my life. I appreciate it," Skovronski adds.

Despite not being able to play baseball this past year, Skovronski did other things to support the Monmouth baseball program. At home, he volunteers his time at the YMCA as a softball coach and umpire.

ACI's Career Development Conference and Employer Expo Builds Career Readiness, Offers Access to Prospective Employers



More than 100 students attended [ACI's Career Development Conference and Employer Expo](#), where they had the opportunity to meet with 25 employers and graduate school representatives, left, and attend seminars on career paths in specific fields, plus networking, implicit bias in the workplace and financial literacy.

The students, from 13 [ACI-member colleges and universities](#), were among 185 people who attended the day-long event Oct. 4 at ACI member [North Central College](#) in Naperville. In addition to students registered for the conference, about 150 of North Central College's first-generation freshmen toured the conference during the day. ACI previously hosted its first career fair and professional development conference at the college in March 2018.

Diverse opportunities for students

Students said the conference gave them a rare opportunity to speak with potential employers and learn helpful career and life skills. For example, [Concordia University Chicago](#) junior Salam Hussein came prepared with a specific list of employers she wanted to meet. "I've been looking for internships, and as a freshman, it was really difficult to get one," she said. "One of the companies seemed very interested. I'm really looking forward to following up."

Malik Johnson, a junior computer science major from [Rockford University](#), said he spoke with employers about internships and with graduate school representatives about earning a master's degree. "It's nice coming to places knowing that the people here are willing to talk to you about their companies, presenting themselves while I'm trying to present myself as well. That's a good experience for me," he said.

Likewise, Matt Dee, a North Central College accounting, finance and economics major, said the experience was helpful, especially the "broader focus" with graduate program representation. "It's one thing to have a job fair where there are just employers," said Dee. "But it's great to have all these other opportunities to look at further enhancement to one's educational background."



Employers spoke highly of student attendees

Employers were pleased with many of the student candidates they met. "I've spoken to many viable candidates whom I'd definitely hire," said Stephanie Douglass of State Farm Insurance Co. She also said the event speakers and skill-building sessions were "super helpful" for students. Omar Coronado and Alexis Salvador, representing Wells Fargo, said they told students about the company's internships and collected several resumes for company recruiters. "It's great to see the level of engagement and students taking the next step," said Coronado. "We've been able to give feedback and discuss career paths."

The event gave Kayla Zemruski, Dayton Freight Lines, Joliet, an opportunity to share information about internships. "We're looking for management interns and management trainees. We need people to manage day-to-day operations in a fast-paced environment," she said, adding many students had good "elevator speeches" and came prepared.

Speakers share expertise in networking, workplace topics and life skills

Students heard a variety of speakers who discussed relevant skills and workplace topics. Michelle Silverthorn, left, CEO,



[Inclusion Nation](#), a diversity consulting firm, said that to transform workplaces into diverse and inclusive spaces, leaders must design workplaces centered on courage, authenticity and belonging. She cited examples of how differently people experience upward mobility in their firms, depending on gender and race. "Changing the rules" can help companies become more diverse and inclusive places, Silverthorn argued, and help companies keep employees over the long term. Silverthorn also cited several strategies to transform workplaces. "The workplace should not be a place where we go and toil, and leave when the day is done," she said. "That is the old rule. The workplace should be where we can be our best self, our whole self, our authentic self." View Silverthorn's TEDx talk at <https://inclusionnation.org/ted-x-talk/>

J.D. Gershbein, right, CEO, [Owlsh Communications](#), spoke at breakfast about building professional networks. Personal branding, he said, differentiates a person from others, and one social media network, in particular, is significant. "The site on which you build your brand is LinkedIn. The LinkedIn profile has become the key point in the business world," he said, adding that business relationships are the "connective tissue" of a person's career.



Skill-building seminars focused on careers in financial services, insurance and nonprofits, email etiquette, micro-internships, first-time job searches and building credit. Seminar sponsors were Baker Tilly, Fifth Third Bank and Upkey.

Locally based employers, as well as 11 Fortune 500 companies and one federal agency were among employers and graduate school programs at the Employer Expo:

Employers

- ALPFA (Assoc. of Latino Professionals for America)
- Aon
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Illinois
- Buckeye International
- Call One
- CBRE
- Central Intelligence Agency
- CME Group
- Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Inc.
- Dayton Freight Lines
- Environmental Design International
- Fifth Third Bank
- Inclusion Nation
- Marsh
- Northwestern Mutual

- Owlsh Communications
- Shure
- State Farm
- Wells Fargo
- WestCare/Sheridan Correctional Center
- Wintrust

Graduate programs

- Dominican University
- Lewis University
- North Central College
- Saint Xavier University

ACI will host the next Career Development Conference and Employer Expo in October 2020. ACI expresses special thanks to North Central College President Troy D. Hammond, Kenneth Hannah, assistant director, conference services and camps, and the North Central College events staff for contributing to the success of the 2019 ACI Career Development Conference and Employer Expo.

ACI Distributes CIC/UPS Scholarships to Members

ACI distributed \$78,000 in CIC/UPS Scholarships to assist students studying at ACI's [26 member colleges and universities](#). Member schools were sent \$3,000 each, thanks to a grant from the [Council of Independent Colleges \(CIC\)](#), Washington, D.C., through the CIC/UPS Educational Endowment.



"The CIC/UPS Educational Endowment has been a longtime contributor to ACI and the students we serve throughout Illinois," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "We are grateful for their continuing support, and we know students appreciate the funds made available to them through this generous grant."

Nationally, CIC provided more than \$1.6 million in student scholarships through state-based associations such as ACI to make private colleges and universities more affordable and accessible to underserved students.

"Independent colleges and universities in this country are remarkably effective at educating and graduating low-income and first-generation students in less time, with less student debt," said Richard Ekman, president of CIC. "Helping these students afford a private college education is a truly critical need in our society."

The CIC/UPS Scholarship Program has made a private college education possible for more than 20,000 low-income and first generation students. This year's scholarships will assist 536 students nationwide, Ekman added.

"The UPS Foundation is honored to work with CIC to provide scholarships for students at independent colleges and universities," said Eduardo Martinez, president of the [UPS Foundation](#) and chief diversity and inclusion officer at UPS. "Our goal is to fund powerful programs that make a lasting difference to the global community."

ACI Partners with 150 Media Stream for Digital Media Stream Contest



Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) and [150 Media Stream](#), Chicago, are working together on a [contest](#) aimed at stimulating students' interest in digital media. ACI member colleges and universities can each submit one entry in the contest, which helps students practice skills to create digital art, produce art in public spaces and possibly showcase their work in downtown Chicago.

150 Media Stream is a multi-faceted achievement in art, architecture and technology that explores the interplay of art, space and viewership in both public and private contexts. At 150 N. Riverside, Chicago, 150 Media Stream is the only structure of its kind dedicated to showcasing local artists alongside renowned and emerging artists from around the world.

Deadline for contest submissions is Jan. 31, 2020. One winning team will be announced by Feb. 28. The winning ACI college or university team will earn a \$3,000 scholarship from 150 Media Stream, have the opportunity to work with a world-known artist and display its work in a prestigious Chicago office lobby for two-to-four weeks. The winning entry will also be displayed on the 150 Media Stream and ACI websites, and it will be recognized at a fall 2020 reception when the work is displayed.

Entries should be submitted to Yuge Zhou, curator, 150 Media Stream, at yzhou@riversideid.com. For additional questions about participating, please contact Mick Weltman, ACI executive director at mweltman@acifund.org or 312-263-2391 ext. 1.

Did You Know?

From ACI Corporate Partner Michael Best Navigating Higher Education

Higher education institutions require experienced legal counsel to assist them in navigating their ever-increasing challenges and extraordinary opportunities.

As outside counsel to many colleges and universities, [Michael Best's Higher Education Group](#) provides a full range of legal services, from the everyday to the extraordinary, which assist higher education institutions in growing and thriving without compromising their missions.



Read more about Michael Best's Higher Education experience and expertise [here](#).

Please Save These Dates for Upcoming ACI Events!

- **Friday, Nov. 1, 2019:** ACI Fall Conference, 8:30 a.m., Doubletree by Hilton, Lisle. For advancement, communications, finance and student engagement professionals at member colleges and universities.
- **Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019:** HR, Diversity and Inclusion Leaders' Breakfast, 8 a.m., University Club of Chicago.

- **Saturday, Nov. 9, 2019:** ACI's Work and Life Skills Boot Camp – Fall Session: "Who Do I Want to Be? How Do I Get There?" 10 a.m., Concordia University Chicago, Koehneke Community Center, River Forest, Illinois.
- **Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020:** Wealth Advisors Breakfast, University Club of Chicago.
- **Friday, April 17, 2020:** ACI Presidents Forum, University Club of Chicago.
- **Friday, April 17, 2020:** ACI Board of Trustees Annual Meeting, University Club of Chicago.
- **Friday, April 17, 2020:** ACI Benefit Reception, University Club of Chicago

ACI Welcomes Year-end Gifts to Support Students at Member Colleges and Universities

ACI accepts gifts of cash, credit card donations and stock



We welcome financial gifts to support our mission, and year-end giving can benefit you and students at member colleges and universities. Your gifts make a difference for many underserved college students attending ACI-affiliated institutions across Illinois. To learn more, [watch these students tell their stories](#), including how ACI scholarships make a difference in their lives.

ACI is a charitable organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to ACI are tax-deductible, as described in the Code. ACI welcomes cash gifts, [online giving by credit card](#) and gifts of stock. Stock gifts can be particularly beneficial because if the stock has increased in value from the time it was purchased, the owner can avoid paying capital gains tax by donating the stock – and the fair market value at the time of the contribution is deductible, subject to certain limits described in the Internal Revenue Code. Be sure to consult your tax advisor/preparer for definitive guidance before engaging in any transaction.

You may designate your gift for [scholarships](#) for first-generation, low-income college students, or for support of the [ACI Peer Mentoring Program](#), which helps first-generation students through the critical first year in college on the way to earning a degree. You can also provide [ACI Named Scholarships](#) to deserving students in honor of individuals, businesses or organizations, or designate gifts for other ACI programs.

For more information about giving to ACI, contact Mick Weltman, ACI executive director, at 312-263-2391, ext. 1, or write to mweltman@acifund.org.



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*Augustana College - Benedictine University - Blackburn College - Concordia University Chicago - Dominican University
 Elmhurst College - Eureka College - Illinois College - Illinois Wesleyan University - Judson University
 Knox College - Lewis University - McKendree University - Millikin University - Monmouth College - North Central College
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