



**Summer 2016**

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### **From the Executive Director**

**Dear ACI Friends,**

**Welcome to the summer issue of *ACI Reporter*,** which features President Troy Hammond and North Central College, three of our scholarship winners, one new board member, new ACI member Benedictine University and an expanded Peer Mentoring Program.

During the next few months we will explore ways to continue to build our [Board of Trustees](#) (our ultimate goal is to have 44 corporate trustees, two for each of our members) and expand our member institutions (now at 22, but with continuing conversations with six former/new members).

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We're also implementing plans for our new fiscal year which began June 1. We hope to raise more scholarship funds, expand our Peer Mentoring Program to seven ACI members, grow our conference programming, and expand our media presence to better advocate for liberal arts education and our member colleges and universities.

Thanks for your continued support this past year, and we look forward to this, our new fiscal year, which just began June 1!



Mick Weltman  
Executive Director

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## ACI Scholars

### Lyela Mutisya Lewis University



**Since she was very young, Lyela Mutisya has been interested in aviation.** One of her early memories is of her father taking her to an airport to meet a friend who took her up for an airplane ride. "I was scared, but very fascinated, and that's when my love for aviation started," she says. That early flight led Mutisya on a path that brought her to [Lewis University](#), with big plans for how best to use her aviation studies in her native Kenya.

Supporting Mutisya's passion is a FIHE/UPS scholarship from ACI, which provides \$2,675 toward her studies at Lewis. A first-generation college student, Mutisya works part-time to support herself. "The funds from ACI give me peace of mind. I don't have to worry about school fees, and I'm extremely grateful," she says.

Mutisya is a citizen of both Kenya and the United States, and she has been living here with her mother, working and attending school since 2001. Mutisya's father operates a coffee farm in Kenya. After taking basic college-level classes at an Illinois community college, Mutisya transferred to Lewis University because of its extensive aviation offerings. A Lewis class in unmanned aircraft systems – drones – got her to thinking about how she could use that technology and its capabilities in the family coffee business.

"Basically, I want to use drones for precision agriculture to foster sustainability and increase transparency," Mutisya says. That means using drones to help manage the coffee farm through precision agriculture techniques, such as mapping to help manage early-stage plant diseases, ensure proper distribution of nutrients and limit expenditures on resources such as fertilizer. Mutisya also wants to help coffee farmers earn a fair return on the sales of the coffee they grow.

"A lot of farmers put much work into their coffee farms, and they don't get their investments back," she says. "My father goes through the same thing – he doesn't get paid fairly but he's put so much work and effort into this coffee farm. I want to help my father and other farmers as well."

She recently attended the Drone World Expo in San Jose, California, where she heard a presentation by John L. Petersen of the Charles A. and Ann Morrow Lindbergh Foundation. There she learned about the foundation's lifesaving work using drones to protect elephants and rhinoceros from poachers. Mutisya hopes that she can use her abilities to help the foundation preserve these valuable species.



"My country depends on tourism for income to create jobs," she said. "I want to raise awareness and use my company to raise funding for them to continue their work. This is something I'm passionate about."

Now a senior, Mutisya expects to graduate from Lewis University in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in aviation administration and a minor in unmanned aircraft systems.

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## Timothy McMullen

### Concordia University Chicago

**Timothy McMullen has a variety of interests and is in a school where he can explore nearly all of them.** McMullen will soon enter his senior year at [Concordia University Chicago](#). He pursues a double major in psychology and preoccupational therapy, plus a sociology minor. McMullen also works for the Department of Public Safety at Concordia, has multiple internships, participates in extracurricular activities – and all the while, he's made grades that have landed him on the Dean's List every semester.

McMullen, from Oak Lawn, is the recipient of a \$1,040 Grover Hermann Scholarship from ACI through the university. His parents help him as much as they can to pay tuition, but with tuition payments for McMullen's younger brother, there's only so much, he says. "The scholarship, along with other financial aid, is the only reason why I've been able to stay in school. It's made all of this possible."

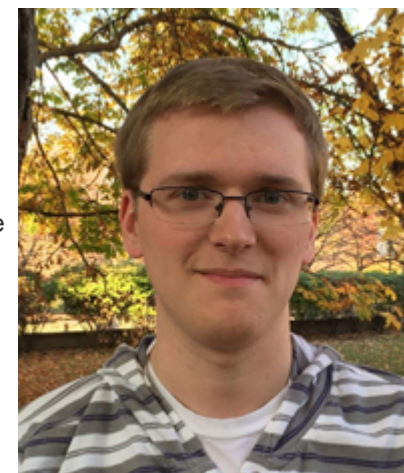
McMullen isn't entirely sure about the specific career he will choose, so he's keeping his options open. One thing is certain: he wants to attend graduate school. The course of study is likely to be a function of what he can afford, McMullen says. "It's either going to be a doctoral program for psychology, possibly neuropsychology, or getting a master's degree in occupational therapy and becoming an occupational therapist," he says.

As a neuropsychologist, McMullen would be able to conduct research in psychology and likely work become a university faculty member, an option he considers "the ultimate career goal." As an occupational therapist, he'd like to work in an outpatient center or clinic.

McMullen's interest in psychology had its origins in a high school psychology class. "It was really interesting to me," he says. "I took general psychology as a general education course in college and loved it. I decided to add a psychology major." His interest in occupational therapy came from an aunt who works in the field and the time he spent observing occupational therapists at Advocate South Suburban Hospital in Hazel Crest. "I enjoy helping people. I saw how rewarding their jobs were as they helped people who have experienced strokes or other trauma," he says.

Concordia was McMullen's college choice because he liked its academic departments, and it's affordable. As a student, he works in the Department of Public Safety doing supervisory work, training, and staffs the desk. He is a member and treasurer of the Psychology Club, and has been an intern in the Psychology Department and with the National Alliance on Mental Illness at its Oak Park location. There, he works in the drop-in center, facilitating activities for clients and performing administrative work. He also helps one of the Psychology Department faculty members with a research study on time-space mapping.

Finally, McMullen is co-leader of Concordia's Ping Pong Club. "It's fun. You meet other people and get to play some ping pong. It's a nice stress reliever," he says.



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## Janet Vasquez

Concordia University Chicago



**Janet Vasquez is a student with a clear purpose and dreams to fulfill.** The [Concordia University Chicago](#) sophomore is from an immigrant family and the oldest of three daughters in the Vasquez household. She is the first in her family to attend college and is making the most of her opportunity.

"I want to become an immigration lawyer," she says. "That's my goal. I am going to law school. I just need to figure that out." To get there, Vasquez is majoring in political science, with minors in art and Spanish. She chose political science because she wants to work in an international organization.

Art is for fun, she says, a chance to express herself artistically. She is fluent in Spanish as well as English, and sees the advantages of being able to read and write Spanish, as well as understanding the cultures of Spanish speakers.

Well aware of the college challenges facing first-generation students, Vasquez says college has pushed her to be better than some expect her to be. "I'm always striving to do better and better," she says. Her academic efforts earned an invitation from Concordia to join the honors program. Those courses have pushed her even more.

A key piece of her college experience is the \$1,900 Michele and Peter Wilmott Minority Leadership Fund Scholarship through Concordia from ACI. Her family has limited financial resources, she explains, and the scholarship is vital. Without it, she'd have to find money from somewhere else. "My parents don't want me to get any more loans, because we have heard the terrible stories of students having to pay those after they graduate," Vasquez says. "I just didn't want to put that much pressure on me or my parents. This scholarship gives me opportunities not a lot of people would have. It allows me to be in school, and it takes away all the pressure, all the financial issues, and allows me to pursue the dreams that I have."

Vasquez, from Chicago, chose Concordia because she knew about the school from living in the area. She likes the personal touch that is part of a small university community and the interconnectedness of the Concordia community. It means something when professors ask how she's doing in class or if she needs class help. "It makes feel like they actually care, unlike some schools, where you are just a number. In this school, you have a name," she says.

Being part of Concordia has also introduced Vasquez to other opportunities, such as working with Habitat for Humanity during spring break this year. She and others from Concordia traveled to South Carolina to help reconstruct houses and other related needs, Vasquez says.

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## Meet ACI Members

### Success in Naperville: North Central College

New science facility, 'Great Books' program set stage for 'modest growth,' says president



**These are exciting times at [North Central College](#), an ACI member college in Naperville, 35 miles west of Chicago.** The college is in the midst of constructing a \$60 million science facility – a "transformative" addition to the college, says its president – and it has begun the process of acquiring and integrating a unique liberal arts "Great Books" college into the institution.

North Central College's academic qualities, its access to business and the arts, and its location in a dynamic community are reasons its president, [Dr. Troy D. Hammond](#), sees the college as a leading higher education institution in the Midwest, poised for modest growth in the next few years.

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***North Central College, in Naperville, enrolls about 3,000 students.***

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North Central College is one of 22 ACI member colleges and universities. Founded in 1861, the college features nearly 70 areas of study, and enrolls about 3,000 students, including some 300 graduate students. It defines itself as "a community of learners dedicated to preparing students to be informed, involved, principled and productive citizens and leaders over their lifetime," according to its mission statement.

Hammond is a scientist, business leader and teacher, who graduated from a liberal arts college in eastern Tennessee, Milligan College. At Milligan, Hammond earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics, and later he earned a doctorate in experimental atomic physics at MIT. He holds numerous patents, has published articles about physics, electronics and energy technologies and spent much of his career working in business in the private sector before joining North Central.

Hammond points to his Milligan years as significant, noting the personal, mentoring relationships he formed with professors in small-class settings. It's the same at North Central. "I knew the 'DNA,' and I understood the DNA when I was first introduced to it at North Central because of that experience," he says. Hammond's training and business experiences, though non-traditional for the role he is in now, were "the perfect combination of experiences to prepare me" to lead North Central, he says. Hammond is now in his fourth year as president.

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***Dr. Troy Hammond is president of North Central College.***

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**New science facility expected to open in 2017**

One of the mandates for Hammond when he began at North Central was to raise funds and build a [new science center](#) to replace aging and outdated science facilities. Located in the center of the Naperville campus, the new structure is intended to attract students to use the facility for regular study and to promote interdisciplinary interaction. "We're building it in a way that we're pulling together all of the sciences into one facility and not just the lab sciences, but math, computer science, psychology, neuroscience, exercise science, our human performance lab – we're putting all these disciplines together in one facility," Hammond says.







***North Central College's new science facility will open next year. The science center is designed to promote interdisciplinary interaction.***

Ultimately, the idea is to promote innovation when different disciplines work together to find solutions to common problems. The 130,000-square-foot facility is expected to be ready for classes in the 2017 spring term. Laboratories will move into the facility in the summer, and the building is expected to be fully operational in the 2017 fall term, Hammond says.

#### **'Great Books' program to be added this year**

In May, North Central announced it had begun the process of acquiring and integrating [Shimer College](#), an independent college currently housed on the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology on Chicago's South Side. Shimer College bases its liberal arts curriculum on reading and discussion of Great Books that form the foundation of Western and global civilization.

"Shimer is a real gem of an institution," Hammond says. "It's a niche model of rigorous liberal arts education that is very unique. We think the program itself is strong. It's exciting, and quite frankly, on North Central's campus, we think it can flourish. We think it's a more attractive value proposition," Hammond says.

The acquisition of Shimer and its integration into the North Central campus is the result of discussions the two schools began last fall. A memorandum of understanding was agreed to this spring by the governing boards of both institutions. While the Shimer Great Books program will remain distinctive, students who major in Shimer's offerings will be North Central students. Faculty, staff and administration will be North Central employees.

Other strong academic programs at North Central include natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry and physics, sure to be enhanced with the completion of the science facility; education, known to Illinois educators for producing outstanding teachers, and accounting and finance. In the past two years, North Central ranked second in Illinois in producing graduates who passed CPA exams on the first try, exceeded only

by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Hammond says. In the next two years, new undergraduate- and graduate-level programs are expected to be launched, he says.

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***North Central College graduates say their liberal arts education prepared them for success. President Troy Hammond argues that small, private colleges are valuable places of liberal arts learning that produce impact and results.***

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### **Undergraduate research a point of emphasis**

Undergraduate research is area of emphasis for students at North Central. Research opportunities across disciplines are common and are viewed by faculty as great learning experiences. "I personally benefited from getting exposure to what research means and doing some research projects as an undergraduate," says Hammond. "I'm a personal believer in it. We've been growing undergraduate research for the past 10 or 15 years."

Since 1998, North Central has hosted its own event, the [Rall Symposium](#), for North Central students to present their original research on a variety of topics. Some projects are funded by internal grants of up to \$5,000 each. In addition, the college sends several students who present their work at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research. Few colleges send more students than North Central to this annual conference, Hammond says.

### **United Methodist Church, ACI relationships strengthen North Central**

Beyond the classroom, an important part of North Central's history is its [affiliation](#) with the United Methodist Church (UMC). The church supports a campus chaplain, has representatives on the board of trustees, and provides programming for students. The church relationship has focused on helping the college emphasize ethics in leadership and social justice. "Those topics have played a significant role in the college throughout its history, and they remain very important today," Hammond says.

The school's relationship with ACI is multi-faceted, he says. From his perspective, Hammond sees value in ACI's ability to bring college leaders together to discuss common concerns. "The role of ACI as a convener of independent colleges is really important," Hammond says. "Certainly in the student affairs area, we've able to learn from each other through some of the programs ACI has sponsored, to help find successful paths for first-generation or minority students." In addition, in the past academic year and the year beginning this fall, ACI has provided 18 North Central students with \$37,800 in scholarship funds.

### **Liberal arts education important to alumni, plus new and current students**

In conversations with alumni, Hammond says they tell him that their North Central education provided good career preparation. "Our graduates leave with really strong capabilities in the liberal arts – the ability to communicate effectively, the ability to think critically – things



that are going to prepare them well for success in life."

Hammond is a proponent of small private colleges and universities, because they provide vehicles to success for students in all socio-economic groups. "I really hope we can get the message out to high school guidance counselors, principals and teachers about the value of schools like ours. There's all kinds of data out there that shows the impact of our kind of schools. We have to carry the flag for small privates, and we're doing our best to do that here," Hammond adds.

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## Featured ACI Program

### ACI Scholars, Liberal Arts Education Celebrated at ACI's Scholarship and Recognition Reception

**ACI's Scholarship and Recognition Reception April 29** was a celebration of the outstanding students the organization serves, and a recognition of the value of liberal arts education in shaping Illinois' workforce. More than 100 people attended the event, at Chicago's Mid-America Club.

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*ACI Board Chair Jim Wylie, left, with Peter Wilmott*

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In his remarks to the attendees, [Dr. James Applegate](#), executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Springfield, said there is considerable evidence that employers are looking for employees who can bring more to the workplace than a particular job skill.



Employers want people with analytical abilities, problem-solving skills and the ability to communicate effectively with an increasingly diverse and global market of consumers, as well as an increasingly diverse workforce, he said. He added that employers want people "who are excited about the opportunity of change and not scared by the specter of change."

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*Dr. James Applegate, IBHE executive director*

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Citing statistics about graduation rates in Illinois, Applegate argued the state has a good system of public and private higher education in which it should invest. "We're really doing our best to assure our folks in the legislature that this is a system worth investing in," he said.

Mick Weltman, ACI executive director, told the audience that [ACI member colleges and universities](#) collectively represent more than 2,500 years of educational service to the people of Illinois. Five ACI member college presidents are first-generation students or the first in their families to be college graduates, he said.



***Chipso Nyambuya, ACI Board of Trustees member-at-large, and member of the Executive Committee, was among the presenters.***

ACI maintains Peer Mentoring Programs at three member institutions, including Augustana College, Dominican University and North Park University. Peer mentor leaders and participants attended the reception, explaining that the program helps first-generation, low-income, minority students remain in college, particularly in their early college years.

"Our retention rate is well above the national average of retention of first-year students. That's across the three colleges," said Angela Frazier, assistant dean for advising services, [Dominican University](#).

ACI presented commemorative plaques to four member presidents leaving office or retiring this summer: Dr. J. David Arnold, president, [Eureka College](#), Eureka; Dr. Larry Braskamp, interim president, [Elmhurst College](#), Elmhurst; Brother James Gaffney, FSC, president, [Lewis University](#), Romeoville; and Dr. Robert L. Head, president, [Rockford University](#), Rockford.

**Haydee Ramirez, peer mentor at North Park University, described the positive impact of the program.**



***Two leaders of ACI colleges and universities attending were, left, Dr. John Comerford, president of Blackburn College, and Dr. Eric Fulcomer, who becomes Rockford University president July 1.***

**Dominican University peer mentors met guests at the ACI Scholarship and Recognition Reception.**



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## Give a Gift and Make a Difference

**You can make a difference for students seeking a quality private liberal arts education by making a personal gift to ACI.** Your contribution of any size will help provide scholarships for motivated low-income and first-generation students from diverse backgrounds attending ACI colleges and universities.

As college tuition and fees continue to rise, students from low-income families lack the financial resources to pay for college without assistance. Tuition and fees at ACI colleges and universities can range up to \$37,000 per year, with many students paying an average of \$25,951 annually. Over 90 percent of students enrolled at ACI institutions receive some form of financial aid, and the numbers of student receiving financial aid continue to grow.



***Your gift to ACI will go directly to students at our 22 colleges and universities who have the greatest financial need. Your financial support will strengthen their ability to stay in college and graduate.***

To make your gift today, please visit our [website](#) or contact Mick Weltman at (312) 263-2391 or at [mweltman@acifund.org](mailto:mweltman@acifund.org). Your gift will go a long way in helping underserved students succeed in college and in life. Thank you!

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## Did You Know?

### Great Expectations: What Students Want from a Modern Campus

News from Aramark, an ACI Corporate Partner

Are your campus dining and facilities services up to students' new standards?

Enrollees today identify a modern campus by its focus on their well-being, comfort, convenience and future success. Find out what students consider the most important aspects of campus life and their favorite on-site hangout spots -- and what makes those places so great -- in this stat-filled [infographic](#).



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## ACI News

### Peer Mentoring Program Expands to Seven Campuses for 2016-17



ACI's [Peer Mentoring Program](#) will expand from three to seven member campuses beginning with the fall 2016 semester. The Peer Mentoring Program, which seeks to increase the number of minority, low-income and first-generation college students who successfully graduate from college, will continue at [Augustana College](#), Rock Island, [Dominican University](#), River Forest, and [North Park University](#), Chicago, with new cohorts established this year at [Blackburn College](#), Carlinville, [Concordia University Chicago](#), River Forest, [Monmouth College](#), Monmouth, and [Quincy University](#), Quincy.

ACI's Peer Mentoring Program supports students who arrive at ACI member institutions with risk factors that could prevent them from graduating, such as educational inequities to poverty and lack of family experience with higher education. To counter those risks, ACI matches these freshmen with peer mentors recruited from among juniors and seniors who faced similar challenges when they came to college. Peer mentors, who receive \$2,500 scholarships for their work, meet with mentees throughout their freshman year, and host campuses provide both mentor training and activities designed to enhance mentees' success. By building a "relationship bridge" between mentees, mentors and the campus community and its support services, ACI's program provides an early warning system that can anticipate and address the particular challenges these students face before those challenges derail students' college career.

In academic year 2016-17, ACI's Peer Mentoring Program will serve 160 students, including 130 mentees and 30 mentors across the seven member campuses, which represent urban, suburban and rural settings throughout Illinois. "Our goal is to boost graduation rates among students who may not have the family resources or experience to succeed in college," explains Executive Director Mick Weltman. "So far, the results of our Peer Mentoring Program are so encouraging that we are taking steps to grow it to all ACI member campuses."

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### Benedictine University rejoins ACI

Effective June 1, [Benedictine University](#) rejoined ACI, following approval by the ACI board of trustees this spring.

The university was founded in 1887, and is a Catholic University in the Benedictine Tradition. Total university enrollment is approximately 10,000 students.

"We're very happy to welcome back Benedictine University to ACI's family of private liberal arts colleges and universities," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "For the fifth consecutive year, Forbes has ranked it among the top liberal arts colleges in the United States, and others, such as U.S. News and World Report, Crain's, Chronicle of Higher Education and PayScale have recognized its outstanding qualities as well."



Since 2015, [Dr. Michael Brophy](#) has served as Benedictine University's president. He previously was president of Marymount California University, Rancho Palos Verdes, California.

Benedictine's main campus is in Lisle. It maintains branch campuses in Springfield, and Mesa, Arizona, and it has adult learning centers at the National Moser Center, Naperville, and the Bellwood Learning Center, Bellwood.

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## **\$25,000 Challenge Grant Goal Achieved!**

**ACI is pleased to announce that we have met the \$25,000 challenge put forth by the [Council of Independent Colleges \(CIC\)](#) in September 2015 for our *Close the Gap Campaign*.** The purpose of the campaign was to fund new scholarships that "close the gap" in tuition costs for rising sophomores attending ACI member institutions who are at risk of abandoning their college careers due to lack of financial resources.

Under the terms of the challenge, ACI was required to raise at least \$25,000 in new gifts by March 31, 2016, to receive a \$25,000 grant from CIC.

ACI successfully raised the matching \$25,000 from charitable donations from individuals and organizations. The total \$50,000 will be distributed as scholarship support to ACI's 22 member colleges and universities for the 2016-17 academic year.

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## **Laura Ortega-Lamela Appointed to ACI Board of Trustees**



**Laura Ortega-Lamela was appointed this spring by the ACI Board of Trustees to serve as a corporate trustee of the organization.** Ortega-Lamela is executive director, International Business Council (IBC) of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, Chicago.

As IBC's executive director, Ortega-Lamela works to increase global trading opportunities for Illinois and bringing Foreign Direct Investment, jobs and revenue to Illinois. [Read more](#)

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**Associated Colleges of Illinois**  
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Knox College - Lewis University - McKendree University - Millikin University - Monmouth College  
North Central College - North Park University - Olivet Nazarene University - Principia College  
Quincy University - Rockford University - Trinity Christian College - University of St. Francis*

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