



Winter 2015

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From the Executive Director

Looking Forward

As I write this, I'm grateful for what we have accomplished in 2015. We've listened to you, enhanced our operations and refocused our work as we prepare to begin a new calendar year. For 2016, ACI has many exciting ideas and plans, and I'd like to share them with you. We will:

- focus on ACI's main responsibilities of raising scholarship funds, growing its [peer-mentoring](#) efforts at member colleges and universities, and offering solid continuing education programs through our four types of conferences.
- continue to share the value of liberal arts education with ACI's [corporate partners and sponsors](#), and we're planning more outreach.
- enter a detailed planning process in early 2016, with the goal of developing a three-year strategic plan, plus annual business plans.
- strengthen our network of [23 colleges and universities in Illinois](#), and partnerships with national organizations such as the [Council of Independent Colleges \(CIC\)](#).

Finally, we have reconstituted ACI's [board of trustees](#) and its roles and responsibilities, and plan to strengthen the organization's leadership throughout all of Illinois.

In this issue of *ACI Reporter*, you'll learn about a new challenge grant we secured to expand our Peer Mentoring Program; three of our outstanding scholars and their stories; efforts at two ACI-member schools to forge international educational partnerships and build food security at home; and some important research findings about private liberal arts from our partners at CIC.

As always, I welcome your feedback and questions, and wish you the best in this holiday season.

Mick Weltman
Executive Director

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ACI Awarded Challenge Grant for Peer Mentoring Program

ACI secured a commitment for a \$10,000 challenge grant from the [Council of Independent Colleges \(CIC\)](#) for a program to expand ACI's Peer Mentoring Program for first-generation, minority and low-income students at member colleges and universities.



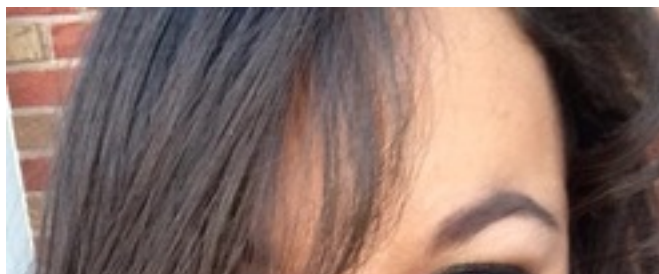
"Evaluations at ACI show that the use of peer mentors -- students trained to guide and assist students facing academic challenges -- has proven to be a highly effective means of increasing retention rates in the target population," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director.

The grant is from CIC's First Opportunity Partners program, funded by the UPS Foundation. It is designed to encourage collaborative programs to enhance minority and first-generation student success at independent colleges and universities. To secure the CIC grant, ACI must raise at least \$10,000 in new gifts from other corporations, foundations or individuals.

When fully funded, this grant project will support initiatives to be implemented during the 2016-2017 academic year.

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ACI Scholars



Natalie Miles, Millikin University

When she was a student at [Pattonville High School](#) in Maryland Heights, Missouri, near St. Louis, Natalie Miles began to see her college path, thanks to an influential Spanish teacher. Now a sophomore at ACI-member [Millikin University](#), Decatur, Illinois, Miles is a Spanish and English double major. Her dream is to



teach either language in secondary schools.

She is a recipient of an ACI Chase/BOC Scholarship this year, funds that she needed to remain at Millikin. "It was definitely helpful, so I could pursue my academic goals," she said. Miles is devoted to her academic studies at Millikin, where she says the professors are helpful, and the Spanish department has great resources for students.

The ACI scholarship has not only helped her training to become a teacher. Miles is active on the Millikin dance team, a passion she continued from high school, and she is secretary of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. Her sorority activities include community service, such as the chapter's recent Community Love Walk, which raised awareness of gang violence in Decatur and in other communities.

Miles chose Millikin after visiting the university. "I felt the most at home here, and I knew immediately this is where I wanted to be." Her brother Jalen is also a student at the university.

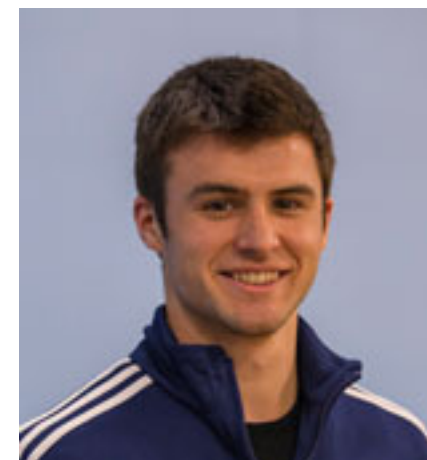
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Christopher Paepke, Trinity Christian College

Christopher Paepke has his sights set on working for a professional sports franchise. From Brookfield, Wisconsin, Paepke, a junior at [Trinity Christian College](#), Palos Heights, Illinois, is a double major in business, and sports and exercise studies.

He has played many sports in his lifetime, but it is [soccer](#) at which Paepke excels. He arrived at Trinity with a junior varsity soccer scholarship and competed in track for a couple of years amid his academic studies.

This semester, Paepke was awarded [ACI's McGraw Emergency Financial Aid Award](#) for \$1,250. "Basically, it's kept me at Trinity," he said. "My family was low on



money. The award made it possible for me to have a Christian education this year." He also has an academic scholarship and an athletic scholarship.

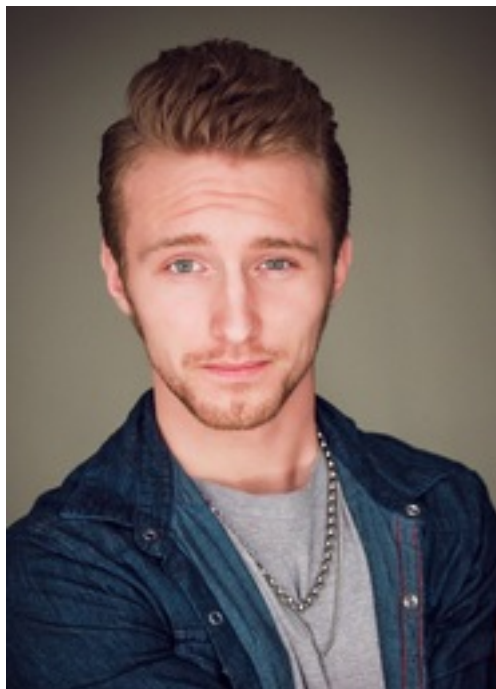


Paepke is a member of the [Christian Reformed Church](#), the same denomination with which Trinity is affiliated. It was important to study and play soccer at a Christian school. "I like that the focus isn't all on winning. It's more about playing for a greater purpose. I like being able to show others that I'm playing for more than just myself," he said.

Like many students, Paepke find some courses challenging, such as accounting. Others, such as an adapted physical education class, give Paepke a chance to work directly with students living with mental health disorders. Paepke's favorite part of being a student at Trinity is small classes, and being able to develop learning relationships with professors.

Paepke's younger brother, Jeff, is a student athlete at Dordt College in Iowa, where he studies engineering and plays football. A sister, Sarah, is a high school student in Milwaukee. Parents Dennis and Debi Paepke reside in the Milwaukee area.

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Joseph Bezenek, Millikin University

Joseph Bezenek's love for theatre has opened all kinds of doors. The Millikin University senior from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has explored film, directing, acting and writing. He started his own company, 4est Films, through which he launched a promotional trailer video for a show he was in this fall, "The Addams Family."

Bezenek, a theatre major at Millikin, Decatur, was awarded the [ACI Montgomery Ward Scholarship](#) this academic year. The \$2,900 award made it possible for Bezenek to remain at Millikin. "I'm able to be here and able to grow here," he said. "If not for this scholarship, I probably wouldn't be here. It's remarkable how this affected my timeline."

Much has happened this year for Bezenek. He starred in "[Ramifications of Nene](#)," a feature film released this past summer on Amazon Prime, while he was performing at Rocky Mountain Reparatory Theatre in Grand Lake,



Colorado. Next semester, he will direct one of his professors, Alex Miller, and a friend, Ryan Hickey, in a production of "Red" by John Logan, where he will raise funds for a program he will help direct at Decatur Correctional Center.

The program will be presented through the center's "[Shakespeare Corrected](#)" program, initiated by Miller.

To start 4est Films, Bezenek took out a loan to purchase editing and animation software, a camera, and other film equipment. Among other projects, Bezenek said he wants to create a video featuring dancers and sign language to honor his sister, Hannah, who lives with hearing loss. He plans to donate proceeds from the video project to benefit people with hearing loss who are unemployed. In addition, Bezenek's brother, Austin, who lives with cerebral palsy, is ranked 8th in the world as a Paralympian runner with Team USA. His other sister, stepsister Sydney, loves the arts as Bezenek does and dominates the courts in basketball and volleyball.

After graduation next spring, Bezenek has his eyes on working for an equity theatre company, and possibly, an entertainment role on a cruise ship which will enable him to travel, learn, and save some money. Eventually, he hopes to work in Chicago, Los Angeles or New York in theatre and film. Writing a book is another project he'd like to complete.

"There are many adventures ahead and many tasks to complete. What will happen first, I'm, not entirely sure," he said. "I'm excited that I don't really know where I'm going."

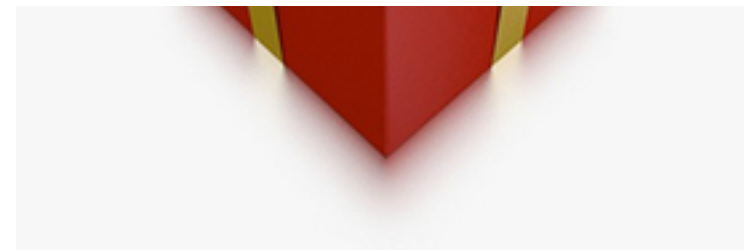
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Please consider a tax-deductible gift to ACI in your year-end giving.

ACI member colleges and universities serve more than 58,000 students. Your gift to ACI can change the lives of some of these students, and there are many ways to contribute. To learn more,



contact Mick Weltman, ACI executive director, at weltman@acifund.org or (312) 263-2391, ext. 523.



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Meet ACI Members



Globalization takes Concordia University Chicago from River Forest, Illinois to China

As [Concordia University Chicago's](#) (River Forest, Illinois) eleventh president, [Rev. Dr. Daniel Lee Gard](#) (left) brings an international perspective to campus. An ordained Lutheran minister with significant experience as a pastor, seminary administrator, teacher, author, and speaker, Gard also holds the rank of Rear Admiral (Lower Half) in the U.S. Navy and is the Navy's Deputy Chief of Chaplains for Reserve Matters, which puts him in charge of military chaplain operations in Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Reserve units around the world. Gard's military experience, including an assignment at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, has convinced him that all institutions must think and act more globally.

"It's critical that we understand that the world is very interconnected and that what happens in one place affects other places in the world in very dramatic ways," observes Gard. Yet Gard says Americans are not truly international. "We've engaged the world," he says, "but without a full understanding of the dynamics of other cultures. We need a new generation of leaders who can

better understand the world's complexities."

Faith-based institutions like Concordia, a comprehensive university of the [Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod](#), have

an important role to play in developing this new generation, says Gard. “My faith drives how I see the world, and that’s true of many other people around the globe as well: Their particular faith drives their vision. I don’t think there has been an awareness of the power and influence of religious faith in world politics, and that’s led to some serious errors in analyzing and understanding the religious dynamics of other parts of the world. That’s how we’ve gotten into some of the difficulties we face overseas.”

By providing a “broad-based liberal arts education that includes an understanding of the influence of religion on how people read the world around them,” Gard believes Concordia University Chicago promotes the understanding needed to resolve or avoid the kinds of conflicts now challenging our nation.

Concordia University Chicago began as Concordia Teachers' Seminary (later Concordia Teachers College), established in Addison, Illinois, in 1864. Concordia University System’s oldest institution, the teachers college relocated to River Forest in 1913. By 1979, it had evolved into a full liberal arts institution known as Concordia College. By 1990, significant growth in the school’s graduate offerings led to a new name: Concordia University. Now serving more than 5,000 students, the university’s mission echoes Dr. Gard’s call for a new generation of leaders: Concordia University Chicago seeks to equip men and women to serve and lead with integrity, creativity, and compassion in a diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world.

Concordia’s plan for accomplishing this mission includes new centers focused on gerontology and literacy, along with an institution-wide globalization initiative. Concordia’s [Center for Gerontology](#) offers services and professional education programs aimed at improving the lives of older adults and their families, together with professional education including a certificate, an MA, and an EDD/PhD in gerontology. Concordia’s [Center for Literacy](#) seeks to close the persistent achievement gap in literacy and advance educational equity by offering innovative community-based literacy programs for youth and adults, together with professional education. But Concordia University’s globalization initiative and the China partnership it has inspired are what spark Gard’s imagination and express his vision of the university’s future.

Concordia University Chicago maintains a partnership with Hebei University of Economics and Business (right), in Shijiazhuang, China, where it has established an undergraduate business degree program approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education.



“It’s critical that Concordia programs and students globalize,” says Gard. “The world is very small now thanks to technology and transportation. What happens in locally in River Forest is going to impact Chicago, Illinois, the Midwest, the nation, the Western Hemisphere, and the world. Having leadership that understands that can avoid some of the unfortunate misreading of the world around us that has led to the current outbreak of violence.”



Concordia’s collaborations with educational institutions in the People's Republic of China (PRC) extend the university’s mission across the globe by addressing the PRC’s desire to draw on Western approaches to improve its higher education practices. Most of these collaborations provide a pathway for Chinese students to come to Concordia’s River Forest campus to complete part of their degree coursework. Two of these partnerships are maturing rapidly: First, working with [Hebei University of Economics and Business \(HUEB\)](#) in Shijiazhuang (300 km south of Beijing), CUC has established an undergraduate business degree program approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education. Through this program, Chinese students study in the PRC for three years, then complete their degree requirements on the Concordia University campus. Already, more than 300 Chinese students are enrolled, with more than 20 expected arrive for their final year of coursework at Concordia in August 2016.

In partnership with [Dalian Shipping College](#) (Dalian is 600 km directly east of Beijing), Concordia is establishing a program through which students study for three years in Dalian, and, if they desire a bachelor’s degree, complete a final two years of coursework at Concordia. The partnership’s first degree program will be in early childhood education, with the first students scheduled to enroll in September 2016. While the initial class is expected to number between 100 and 200, capacity has been built for up to 3,000 students in total. Concordia University Chicago is developing the entire curriculum and assisting in identification of faculty and support staff in China. Dalian Shipping College is providing facilities and systems support.

“Our partnerships with China not only fulfill our mission of preparing men and women for vocational leadership in a global manner,” says Gard, “but while we provide new educational opportunities to Chinese students, our domestic students also benefit from their interacting with international students on campus – from exposure to varied cultures and traditions that prepares all students for success in a global environment.”

Concordia's globalization initiative also includes a variety of academic and cultural interactions. "By sponsoring events – such as a meeting of the Liberian Studies Association – sending faculty on overseas sabbaticals, sending teacher-interns to Hanoi, we're promoting interaction with individuals representing the spiritual, cultural, and political communities of cultures quite different from the U.S," Gard says, "and we are encouraging our students and faculty to become part of the larger world community. We can help bind nations together with a common education, a common purpose as future leaders."

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Monmouth College emerges as a leader in the food security movement

"Strategic planning is not just about projecting past trends out into the future," observes [Clarence Wyatt](#). The 14th president of [Monmouth College](#) (Monmouth, Illinois) says: "Effective planning looks at two fundamental questions: What does society need? What can we do to fulfill that need?"

Wyatt believes residential liberal arts colleges must be prepared to answer these questions. "Our brand – private liberal arts colleges – is being challenged to justify itself on the basis of accessibility, affordability, opportunity, and relevance of the experience," says Wyatt. "People want to know: Is a private liberal arts education just a privilege for the privileged? Am I going to spend four years at this institution, then get a job at Starbucks, live in my parents' basement, and watch the Kardashians until I'm 38? The great thing is that liberal arts colleges like Monmouth have powerful answers to these questions."





Monmouth College has emerged as a leader in the food security movement, and is a founding member of Presidents United to Solve Hunger (PUSH), a new coalition of more than 60 colleges and universities worldwide to fight hunger and malnutrition.

An experienced strategic planner, Wyatt has been actively plotting the trajectory of liberal arts education for more than three decades. Before joining Monmouth College, during a long career at his alma mater -- Centre College, Danville, Kentucky -- Wyatt authored each of that college's strategic plans since the 1980s. At his departure from Centre, Wyatt was its chief planning officer and special assistant to the president, as well as the Pottinger Distinguished Professorship of History.

Wyatt's arrival at Monmouth College, in 2014, coincided with impressive positive indicators that the school -- founded in 1853 by Scotch-Irish Presbyterian pioneers -- could stand up to the scrutiny of the current environment. Monmouth had just opened a new [Center for Science and Business](#) as part of a 15-year, \$120 million facilities improvement plan. It had added new majors and pre-professional programs, new summer research opportunities for students, and a wider selection of off-campus study opportunities. When Monmouth surveyed its graduates from the previous several years, 99 percent of those responding said they were employed or engaged in advanced

studies within six months of earning their undergraduate degrees.

As President Wyatt contemplated Monmouth College's future against this backdrop, he concluded that "the idea of just monitoring progress toward a degree is insufficient to distinguish an institution. That can be done anywhere. A degree is a product, and that product can be produced more cheaply, efficiently, in volume through other means. What we need to be about," says Wyatt, "is mentoring the guided growth of young women and young men. We all talk about educating the whole person, and that's not just a philosophical construct. It's the organizing principle for everything we do, because the essence of the liberal arts experience matches exactly what society says it needs and wants."

In re-crafting strategic planning at Monmouth, says Wyatt (right), "We asked ourselves: What are our core commitments? What will we go to the mat for? What is distinctive about Monmouth? And does anyone beyond the confines of our campus care about those same things? Do they address the needs and concerns of the larger society?" Wyatt believes Monmouth is well positioned to address those concerns. "If you keep up with political, social, cultural, and economic trends, if you talk to recruiters and HR professionals, you find that they want people who continue to grow and learn, who take ideas and put them together to achieve new insights, who take responsibility for themselves and for others, who take a global perspective. These are precisely the characteristics Monmouth nurtures in young people."

A key element in Monmouth College's approach to matching society's (and its students') needs and wants is "breaking down barriers between disciplines – because," says Wyatt, "students don't necessarily see themselves in terms of discrete disciplines."



This thinking informs Monmouth's "Triads for Excellence," a model program for integrated learning launched in 2014. Through Triads, a team of three faculty members representing differing disciplines engages in academic research and discussion on a critical societal issue. The first Triads initiative addresses the issue of [food security](#) and complements Monmouth's strategic location in one of the world's most fertile agricultural regions. The Triads faculty team, representing biology, political economy and commerce, and anthropology/sociology, has helped students consider how to ensure adequate food production, availability, safety, and nutrition, and to explore issues

ranging from the ethics of genetic engineering to the logistics of marketing and transportation.

Monmouth's Triads initiative on food security prompted offerings of more than a dozen food security-related courses, ranging from environmental studies to history, and drew on a variety of Monmouth resources, including both the new science center's laboratory dedicated to nutrition and food chemistry and the college's six-acre research farm. Students in any major or class year could participate in Triads, and by completing specific courses in the sciences, social sciences, or humanities, they could note on their resumes that food security courses and research experiences were a focal point of their studies.

Monmouth College has emerged as a leader in the food security movement, and is a founding member of [Presidents United to Solve Hunger \(PUSH\)](#), a new coalition of more than 60 colleges and universities worldwide to fight hunger and malnutrition. In December 2014, President Wyatt joined 25 other college presidents and senior administrators at the United Nations to sign a pact that will serve as a blueprint for higher education's role in addressing food security issues.

"Triads is a great mechanism by which to break down barriers and prepare students to achieve, thrive, lead, and succeed," says Wyatt. "It offers students a multidisciplinary, hands-on experience, with that global perspective that is so essential for anyone today who's going to be equipped to effect positive change in the world. Triads is a great concrete demonstration of all of those wonderfully powerful aspects of the liberal arts experience."

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Did You Know?



Research shows private liberal arts colleges are more cost-effective than public institutions

Private nondoctoral institutions like Associated Colleges of Illinois members produce graduates with high-quality baccalaureate degrees -- and they do so at much lower cost to taxpayers than do comparable public institutions, according to [***The Cost-Effectiveness of Undergraduate Education at Private Nondoctoral Colleges and Universities: Implications for Students and Public Policy.***](#)



This new report, published by Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), proposes that if state aid to eligible students choosing private higher education were increased even modestly, many students might switch from public institutions to more efficient private institutions. In principle, this shift could achieve a corresponding reduction in operating appropriations for public institutions, together with savings on student aid

programs in states where tuition grants now go primarily to public college students. These savings might be multiplied because many students switching from public to private institutions would earn their degrees more quickly -- at lower overall cost to the state.

The study was conducted by two researchers from *public institutions*: William Zumeta of the University of Washington and Nick Huntington-Klein of California State University/Fullerton. The two used 2005–2012 data from the U.S. Department of Education and other federal sources to compare private nondoctoral institutions with public institutions.

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