



Associated Colleges of Illinois

## Annual Report 2021-2022



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

# Many Thanks!



Dear Friends of ACI,

Our last fiscal year brought both past and future to the forefront for ACI. We hired a new executive director, April Arnold. April brings solid professional expertise and new ideas that have already begun to drive the change that ACI needs. We also recognized and honored Mick Weltman, who retired after nearly eight years as executive director.

We were proud to commemorate ACI's 70th Anniversary at an event showcasing the talent produced by ACI-member institutions, while also raising more than \$85,000 for our work. We heard that 12 of the 22 schools that helped establish ACI in 1952 were still members, which is remarkable. This past fiscal year, more than 250 students benefitted from our financial assistance, in addition to the programs we offer that provide non-financial support. More broadly, more than 24,000 alumni of our member schools work for Illinois companies, and these institutions contribute \$3.7 billion to Illinois' economy every year.

We expanded our Peer Mentoring Program to 12 schools. The program's goal is to help underserved students attending ACI member institutions stay in school and earn degrees. This academic year, the program supports 26 mentors and 130 mentees, a total of 156 students statewide. In addition, despite the ongoing pandemic challenges we held successful events for our member schools' students and staff throughout the year.

The new logo we introduced keeps the familiar orange color in the circle design, but now includes the state image of Illinois. We added Instagram to our social media to expand our influence and reach students.

We were recognized with Silver Trumpet Awards by the Publicity Club of Chicago (PCC) for our webinar focused on ACI's alumni employment data and for our 2020-2021 Annual Report. The Chicago chapter of the Public Relations Society of America recognized ACI with an Award of Excellence for our 2021 Virtual Benefit Reception.

We feel positive about the future but recognize that the financial challenges of the pandemic years are still significant. We are humbled by, and grateful for, your past support of ACI and recognize the difference that our member institutions, our staff, our board members and our donors have made and will continue to make in the lives of individuals, organizations and the state of Illinois.

We hope that you would consider increasing your support this year.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lyn Bulman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lyn Bulman  
Chair, Board of Trustees

## ACI's 70th Anniversary Celebration Raises \$85,000 for Student Programs and Scholarships

ACI raised nearly \$85,000 in estimated net revenue at its 70th Anniversary Celebration April 22, 2022, a strong fundraising result for ACI since it initiated its April fundraiser in 2016. The funds included an estimated \$20,900 in pledges for “second-mile” gifts made at the event. About 130 people attended the event at the University Club of Chicago, with live music provided by the North Park University Jazz Ambassadors.

ACI also established a new high for event sponsors with 11, plus an additional sponsor for the ACI Presidents Forum, held earlier in the day.

The occasion marked ACI's 70th year of service to Illinois colleges and universities, and their students. The purpose was to recognize ACI's member colleges and universities, recall the organization's roots and history, and to raise program and scholarship funds for students.

Twelve of 22 founding members are still with ACI today. The 12 schools are Augustana College, Aurora University, Blackburn College, Eureka College, George Williams College (part of Aurora University), Illinois College, Illinois Wesleyan University, Millikin University, McKendree University, North Park University, Quincy University and Shimer College (part of North Central College).

Featured speaker was Tracie Morris, U.S. chief human resources officer and chief inclusion officer, BMO Harris Financial Group. She earned degrees from Benedictine University and North Central College, both ACI-affiliated colleges. “When I was at an ACI school, I never envisioned I would have this power to do such great things,” she said. “But I do remember the educators, the teachers and the students who are with me and gave me my voice while I was getting my education. That education was very important to me because I would not be here today.”

**Carlos Robles, Saint Xavier University, Tracie Morris, BMO Harris Financial Group and Mia Pitts-Hope, Wheaton College, spoke of inspiration and hope at the 70th Anniversary Celebration.**

Carlos Robles, a finance graduate from Saint Xavier University, an ACI member, was a recipient of an ACI General Scholarship. He and his family came to the United States from Ecuador when he was very young. Robles joined a financial company after graduation. “This scholarship provided so much help in getting where I am. Thank you so much to the donors. I am eternally grateful for the scholarship. I want to thank ACI for allowing me an opportunity to share my story and allow me to better my life in general.”

Mia Pitts-Hope graduated with a communication degree from Wheaton College. She told the audience her grandmother inspired and supported her for much of her life. After her passing and other challenges, Pitts-Hope was awarded a McGraw Emergency Financial Aid Fund grant from ACI. She planned to use her degree “to improve the world around me through film, visual storytelling, journalism and design. I plan to cultivate works of arts and carry on my grandmother's legacy.” She added she was “grateful for the McGraw Foundation and its generous contribution and thankful for ACI. What seems to us as bitter trials are blessings in disguise.”

ACI Board of Trustees member Rob Johnson, president of Rob Johnson Communications, was master of ceremonies.

**Rob Johnson, of Rob Johnson Communications, was master of ceremonies, his second time in the role.**





## ACI Scholarships Serve More than 250 Illinois College Students



In the 2021-2022 academic year, ACI provided funds to member schools that helped 244 students with \$403,290 in scholarships, funded by companies, foundations and individuals. The average scholarship amount was \$1,694.

Among the scholarships are ACI Named Scholarships. In 2022, the 70th Anniversary Celebration led to the establishment of several new Named Scholarships. Established by companies, foundations and individuals, all named scholarships offered by ACI include:

- The A. Montgomery Ward Foundation Scholarship
- Aileen S. Andrew Foundation Scholarship
- Baker Tilly ACI Scholarship
- Carol Whitcomb Scholarship
- CIC/UPS Scholarship
- The Deborah M. Sawyer and Leslie J. Sawyer Outstanding STEM Student Award
- Degree Insurance ACI Scholarship
- Fiducient Advisors Knowledge is Power Scholarship
- Frank D. Cella ACI Scholarship
- Gallagher ACI Scholarship
- Hogan, Marren, Babbo, & Rose LTD ACI Scholarship
- Husch Blackwell ACI Scholarship
- Jackson Lewis ACI Scholarship
- KRD, Ltd. Scholarship
- The Michele and Peter Willmott Fund for Minority Student Leadership Scholarship
- Sheehan Nagle Hartray Architects Scholarship
- Next Generation Women in Finance WILD Gives Back Scholarship
- PACCAR Inc Foundation Scholarship
- Robbins Schwartz ACI Scholarship
- Sikich LLP ACI Scholarship
- Tracie Morris ACI Scholarship
- TTX Company ACI Scholarship

## CME Group Awards Two-Year Grant to ACI

CME Group Foundation, Chicago, awarded a two-year general operating grant totaling \$50,000 to ACI. Funds will be provided to ACI in two installments of \$25,000 each, to be used from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, according to the grant agreement.

In July 2020, CME Group Foundation awarded ACI a one-year, \$25,000 general operating grant. CME Group board member Elizabeth Cook is a member of the ACI Board of Trustees.



## Illinois College Joins ACI Peer Mentoring Program

Illinois College, Jacksonville, became the 12th ACI member to join the ACI Peer Mentoring Program.

The ACI Peer Mentoring Program's overall goal is to help underserved students attending ACI member institutions stay in school and earn degrees. In the 2021-2022 academic year, the program supported 26 mentors and 130 mentees, a total of 156 students statewide.

Foundations supporting the Peer Mentoring Program include the BNSF Railway Foundation, ITW Foundation, Siragusa Family Foundation and an organization that wishes to remain anonymous. Several individuals have contributed to support the program throughout its history.

**Twelve ACI campuses are serving students through ACI's Peer Mentoring Program.**



## More than 180 Students Register for ACI's Work and Life Skills Boot Camps



ACI's highly successful Work and Life Skills Boot Camps continued this past year, drawing 183 student attendees from member colleges and universities. Live Zoom sessions offered in September 2021 focused on resume' writing, investing in the stock market, micro-internships and career mentoring. Panels of young professionals and early career launchers from Citi answered questions for attendees. 53 students registered for this event.

In April 2022, with the theme, "Adulting 101," the boot camp featured YouTubers from Ireland and Canada who offered style tips to help ACI graduates seeking jobs. Data suggests that the majority of registrants identified as either first-generation, low-income, minority or a combination of the three demographics. 130 students were registered.

Work and Life Skills Boot Camps are held in fall and spring, and are exclusively for students attending ACI member colleges and universities. Sessions are open to all ACI students, with an emphasis on first-generation, low-income and other underserved student populations, to help fill information and networking gaps that other students may not experience.

Thanks to a charitable contribution from Citi, ACI campuses that hosted viewing rooms for the event also received complimentary lunches for attendees.

## More Than 400 Professional Staff Attend ACI's Virtual Professional Development Conferences

ACI's popular Professional Development Conferences drew approximately 430 attendees from member colleges and universities. The conferences were live on Zoom, with the Dec. 1-2, 2021, conference drawing 225 registrants, and the spring conference, June 1-2, 2022, drawing 195 registrants.

McKendree University, Lebanon, Illinois, and Saint Xavier University, Chicago, each had more than 18 staff and faculty members attending the Dec. 1-2, 2021, conference. BKD CPAs & Advisors (now FORVIS) sponsored the virtual event.

For the June 1-2, 2022, conference, 96 percent of ACI-member institutions took advantage, with Aurora University, Aurora, Illinois, and Saint Xavier University, Chicago, each with 20 staff and faculty members registered.

The virtual conferences featured the traditional four tracks in advancement, finance, public relations and marketing, and student engagement. Each track offered three 45-minute sessions, and recordings were made available to attendees. Presenting speakers represented ACI's network of member institutions, corporate trustees, corporate partners, staff members and affiliated organizations.



**Giovanna "Gigi" Gonzalez, The First Gen Mentor, discussed financial literacy at the April 2022 Work and Life Skills Boot Camp.**

## Chicago Public Relations Organizations Recognize ACI



The ACI team earned two awards from the Publicity Club of Chicago (PCC) for work done in 2020, including a “Golden Trumpet Award,” for the organization’s 2020 Virtual Benefit Reception. The Golden Trumpet Award is given to the judges’ top choice in each awards category. The ACI Benefit Reception was honored in a category for special events done virtually.

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

Meanwhile, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Chicago chapter recognized *ACI Reporter*, the organization’s newsletter, with its Award of Excellence for digital publishing. PRSA Chicago previously recognized *ACI Reporter* with a similar award in 2019.

## S. Georgia Nugent Elected ACI President

The ACI Board of Trustees elected President S. Georgia Nugent of Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, as ACI president for two years. She succeeded President Jamel SC Wright of Eureka College, who had served as ACI’s president since 2018.

In her role as ACI president, Nugent will serve as vice chair of the board and of the ACI Executive Committee, presiding at meetings of the board or committee in the absence of the board chair, as well as other designated duties.

Nugent, Illinois Wesleyan’s 20th president, was appointed to the position by the university’s board of the trustees in November 2019 after serving briefly as interim president that year. She previously was president at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, and interim president at The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio. Nugent has worked in faculty and administrative roles at Princeton University. She taught classics on the faculties of Brown University, Cornell University, Swarthmore College and Kenyon College.

She is currently a senior fellow at the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). A widely published scholar of the classics and of higher education, Nugent earned a bachelor’s degree from Princeton University and a doctorate from Cornell University.



**S. Georgia Nugent, Illinois Wesleyan University**



## ACI Board of Trustees Honor Retiring ACI Executive Director Mick Weltman

The ACI Board of Trustees honored Mick Weltman, ACI executive director, at the board's 2022 annual meeting in Chicago. Weltman, who began his role as executive director in late 2014, retired in June 2022.

His tenure at ACI included an increase of six member colleges and universities, including two that returned to the organization. He led development of research projects that showed member institutions' value to the state of \$3.7 billion, and that more than 24,000 alumni of member schools work at 148 top Illinois companies.

Weltman and staff secured at least eight grants from the Council of Independent Colleges, Washington, D.C., which established or funded several ACI programs. In addition, ACI increased its Peer Mentoring Program member campuses from three to 12; established Named Scholarships; established partnerships with Parker Dewey for micro-internships and Sage Scholars for tuition discounts for students; became a regular participant in the annual Midwest Roundtable on Talent at Mackinac island, Michigan; established an ACI Board of Trustees student position; initiated regular discussion groups for board members, presidents and provosts; and introduced a new website, organizational logo and design.

Prior to joining ACI, Weltman was a consultant to associations and nonprofit organizations, and served as an adjunct instructor at multiple colleges.

Lyn Bulman, chair, ACI Board of Trustees, presented Weltman several gifts on behalf of the board and staff. In addition, President Gene Crume, ACI executive committee member and president, Judson University, presented Weltman the university's Presidential Award for Outstanding Achievement.



**Lyn Bulman, chair of the ACI Board of Trustees, presented an acrylic memento and several other gifts to retiring Executive Director Mick Weltman.**

## **Nishal Weems** Augustana College Peer Mentoring Program



**"I've always been a history fanatic growing up. I used to watch World War II documentaries, and the Cold War documentaries. I was really big into what shaped our country."**

William "Nishal" Weems has always had a passion for history. And medicine. At Augustana College, he furthered these interests into a desire to become a psychiatrist. He looked at many colleges and universities before he visited Augustana. "What a difference," he said. "When I went on my visit, the students they actually showed you attention as high school senior. They integrate you within the Augustana culture."

Now in his senior year at Augustana, Weems, of Carpentersville, Illinois, says he has had a great experience at Rock Island campus and had "amazing" working relationships with professors in history, his major, and science topics such as biology and chemistry, his minors. A summer internship has cemented his interests in history and medicine.

"I've always been a history fanatic growing up," he said. "I used to watch World War II documentaries, and the Cold War documentaries. I was really big into what shaped our country." But he always wanted to be a physician, too. History about psychology interested him, and so did a class he took about history of diseases.

Now he is focused on mental health for young people as a possible career. "A lot of our generation focus on mental health because it's now just becoming a problem that we're looking at," he said. "How can we prevent this, how can we comfort those who are in need of help? That's where my mind is always thinking."

When Weems entered Augustana for the first time, he joined a mentorship program for incoming freshmen called PACE. From there, he joined ACI's Peer Mentoring Program. His mentor, Jake Washington, would meet with him regularly. He said it opened his eyes and helped him appreciate his background as a biracial man, with parents who are African American and Indian. "We would have two weekly meetings to talk about my mental health or to talk about how my experience was going, and anything that was on my mind," Weems said. "Jake took me under his wing and our relationship grew. Even to this day, he graduated two years ago, we still talk on a daily basis. It's a partnership, and it's a brotherhood, and it's relationships that will never end because we all care, we all want to see each other succeed." The ACI Peer Mentoring Program made a positive contribution to his college experience, and he says he is grateful to donors who make it possible.

This summer, Weems worked at a hospital, collecting data for a research project on sleep. "I'm not at the University of Chicago at an internship at Mitchell Hospital without ACI," he said. "It's really an eye-opening experience. When you're living every day and you're blessed, you don't think about what could happen or what other people are going through. Being in this hospital setting, it really humbles you."

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



## **Temilolu Slack** **Benedictine University** **ACI General Scholarship**

Temilolu Slack is survivor, who is focused now on a graduate degree in clinical psychology from Benedictine University, Lisle, Illinois. Slack, a first-generation student from Willowbrook, Illinois, has survived domestic abuse, serious health problems and surgeries related to asthma/COPD, and the COVID-19 pandemic. One day, she hopes to earn a doctoral degree.

Slack began her college career in 1991, attending colleges in the Chicago area before entering the College of DuPage. There, she took part in a transfer program that led her to Benedictine University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in organizational leadership in 2021.

"I started in January of 2020, and then I had some health challenges. I had four surgeries in 2020, but I didn't let that stop me. But in addition to all of that, the pandemic hit," she said. Slack had completed coursework in business- and economics-related topics at the College of DuPage, and she had worked in a call center at AT&T. Her Benedictine advisor recommended she study organizational leadership for her undergraduate degree.

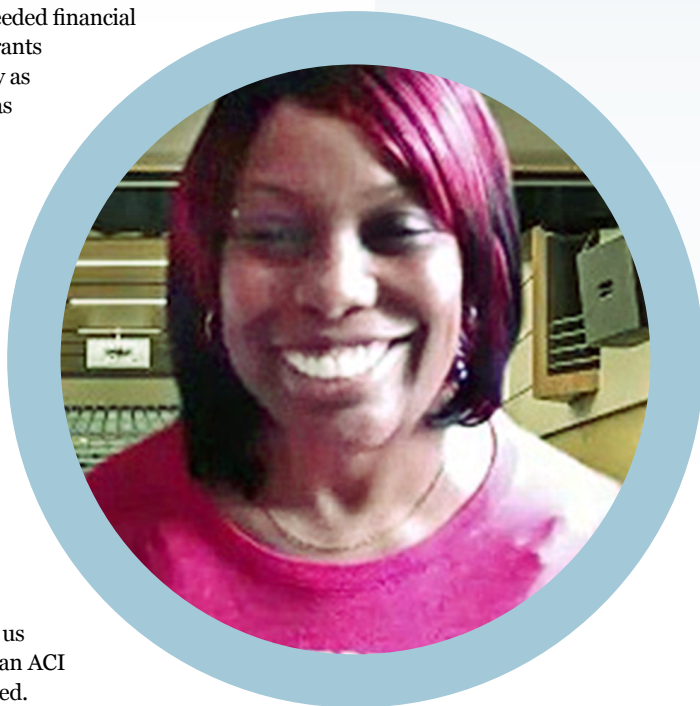
"My goal is to start my own not-for-profit. I want to be able to help communities because I came from a domestic violence-marriage situation. I want to be able to help single mothers that have been abused and fathers that are struggling, because men get abused as well," she said.

To earn her bachelor's degree at Benedictine, Slack needed financial help in her senior year. She wasn't eligible for more grants and loans, she said. "So, I just started writing my story as I'm applying for the scholarships. I didn't know if I was going to be approved for anything," Slack said. To her surprise, the financial aid staff at Benedictine, impressed by her story and determination to earn a degree, decided she would be awarded an ACI General Scholarship. The funds were enough to fill a substantial financial gap, enabling her to finish her bachelor's degree.

"I just was in tears," Slack said. "I just couldn't believe it. I was like, 'Is this real? Am I dreaming?' I just couldn't believe it. If not for this award, I would not be here right now, in my master's program."

To donors who make ACI scholarships possible, Slack is grateful. "Thank you for believing and investing in the future of others to be able to make a difference in someone else's life. Thank you for giving us that opportunity," she said. One day, she wants to be an ACI donor, helping students in the same way she was helped.

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## Montreal Thomas Blackburn College

### Peer Mentoring Program

Many students at Blackburn College probably have met Montreal Thomas. He tutors students in math, political science and works as a writing assistant, while attending classes at the Carlinville, Illinois, campus. A senior from Peoria, Thomas is the oldest of five children in his family. He expects to graduate in May 2023 with a double major in math and political science, and a minor in English.

Thomas chose Blackburn because it was affordable, close to home, and it had rolling admissions, he said. He likes the community atmosphere, knows other students well and visits professors often.

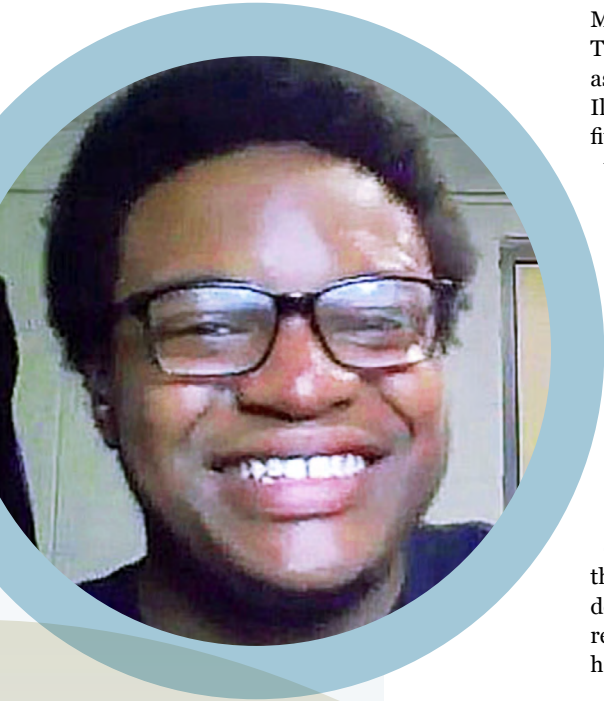
Growing up, Thomas told people his favorite subject in school was math. He'd done well in math classes at Richwoods High School in Peoria, and it continued at Blackburn. He became a political science major at Blackburn.

"I engage with the news a lot, and just from seeing all of the discourse in our media today and how separated people are, I think it would be something to add on top of my mathematics degree to balance it out and be well oriented. I always liked to read," he said. After college, Thomas isn't sure about a career, but he is focused on taking the Law School Admission Test.

When he first came to Blackburn, Thomas, a first-generation student, had a peer mentor, a junior named Rommel. "He would ask me if I needed anything or someone to talk to," Thomas said. "I didn't have many one-on-one conversations back in high school or anything, so having someone be there to let you know that everything is going to be OK was kind of refreshing."

Thomas began as a math tutor in his sophomore year. The following year, he became a tutor in political science, and this year, became a writing assistant. Tutoring has paid off for Thomas personally. "I've had a big problem with anxiety, but also like helping people, so this was a way for me to meet and talk to people in not very large spaces," he said. "It was like a three-on one, or five people in a room having a fluid conversation. That's really helped me."

One subject that comes up a lot in his tutoring work is time management, a familiar theme for peer mentoring students. "Blackburn is a work college, so, being able to balance your work and also being able to perform in your classes is a pretty tough thing to do. Having that skill both in academics and outside of school is a good thing to have," he said.



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## Bethsaida Rodriguez

### Judson University

#### ACI General Scholarship

When she was in fifth grade, Bethsaida Rodriguez began running for fun. A coach helped her get rides to practice and track meets, and helped her acquire running shoes. Her interest in the sport grew, and she ran in high school. She got a few offers to run at the college level, choosing to attend nearby Judson University, where Rodriguez is on the university's cross country and track teams.

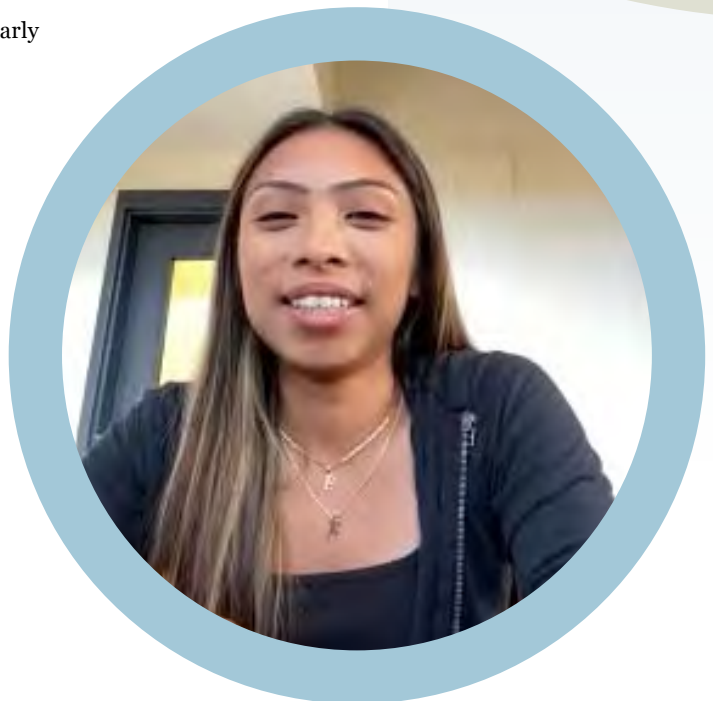
"I didn't know if I wanted to run or not in college, but then I saw it would be an opportunity for scholarship, so I went for it, and now I'm running here at Judson," she says. "The sport has given me a lot of opportunities and a lot of chances to do things that I wouldn't have done without the sport, so I'm very grateful for it."

Rodriguez, who was born in Mexico, came to the United States with her family at age three. She lives in Elgin, Illinois, with her parents and four younger brothers. When she chose Judson, Rodriguez was interested in culinary education. But her running career led to a major in Health Promotion and Performance, specializing in exercise sports science. "It makes me a better athlete. It makes other athletes better athletes. I found a connection there, I liked it, and I stuck with it," Rodriguez says. She added a minor in psychology, which she sees as an important component in development of athletes. Though undecided about a career after college, Rodriguez expects to work in some aspect of the sports industry.

Her father has helped her pay for tuition, but in early 2022, he was unable to work. Rodriguez reached out to Judson for financial help. The university offered her a lifeline by awarding her an ACI General Scholarship, which helped her remain in school. "I was freaking out, you know?" she says. "I was super, super thankful to find out the scholarship was available. Honestly, thank you so much. It's been a big help, and I appreciate you, the donors, everybody. It's just been a weight off the shoulders."

"Thanks to people such as the donors, and other help that has been brought into my life, I've been able to get by and to get through these barriers," Rodriguez adds.

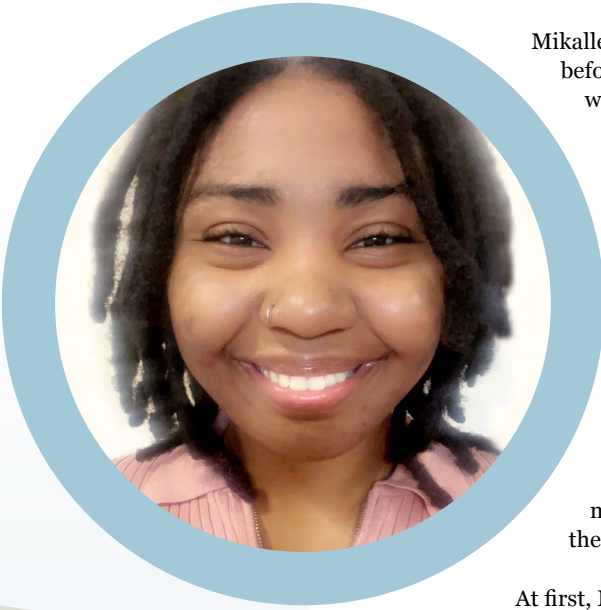
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## Mikalle Montgomery McKendree University

### Fiducient Advisors Knowledge is Power Scholarship



**"Thank you so much.  
I thank this person  
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Mikalle Montgomery made a promise to her mother, Ypakka, before her death in March 2020, from a heart attack: that she would complete her college education and earn a degree.

"I told her that college is not just for me. It's for us," she says. "Because not many Black kids in Chicago get to go to college." Montgomery's father passed away in 2015.

The junior from Chicago lives on her own and attends McKendree University, majoring in sociology.

A reason why she chose McKendree is that she earned several college credits from a community college while she was in high school, and those credits transferred. At the university, Montgomery developed close relationships with professors and staff. "It's a great place to network. I had all these people in my life that just kept me on track when my mom passed away. It hit hard, but they were pushing me the hardest to keep going," she says.

At first, Montgomery was interested in psychology, but changed her major to sociology. "Sociology opened my eyes to a lot of stuff. The study of people became a focus of mine. I decided to study sociology because it's more on the line of public speaking, podcasting and advocating more out loud," Montgomery says. She wants to be an advocate for adolescents and minorities, and speak about mental health and women's health.

In 2022, Montgomery was at a crossroads. She did not have enough funding to continue at McKendree University – and achieve the goal she promised her mother. "I couldn't afford to keep going there because I didn't have the grants," Montgomery explained. "I didn't have the money. I didn't have enough. Because my mom was the only person that took care of me. When she died, it was like, 'I don't have what you are asking of me.'"

That is when the university's financial aid staff reached out to her with the Fiducient Advisors Knowledge is Power Scholarship, provided through ACI. That scholarship enabled her to continue her education and motivated her to keep going.

She is also grateful for the donor who made her scholarship possible. "Thank you so much. I thank this person for giving me the opportunity to prove that I am able to be more than what I've been through. I thank this person for giving me the second chance that I needed," she says. And one day, she hopes to give back to people with needs such as hers, Montgomery says.

"I'm just grateful to have this opportunity. To my donor, a big thank-you. I appreciate them so much," she added.

## Kenyahn May Millikin University

### Peer Mentoring Program

Kenyahn May grew up reading about criminal cases and watching crime shows on television. That interest led him to major in criminal justice and sociology at Millikin University. Now a sophomore, May's interests have grown. And, in his first year in college, he got some helpful guidance as a mentee in ACI's Peer Mentoring Program at Millikin, he says.

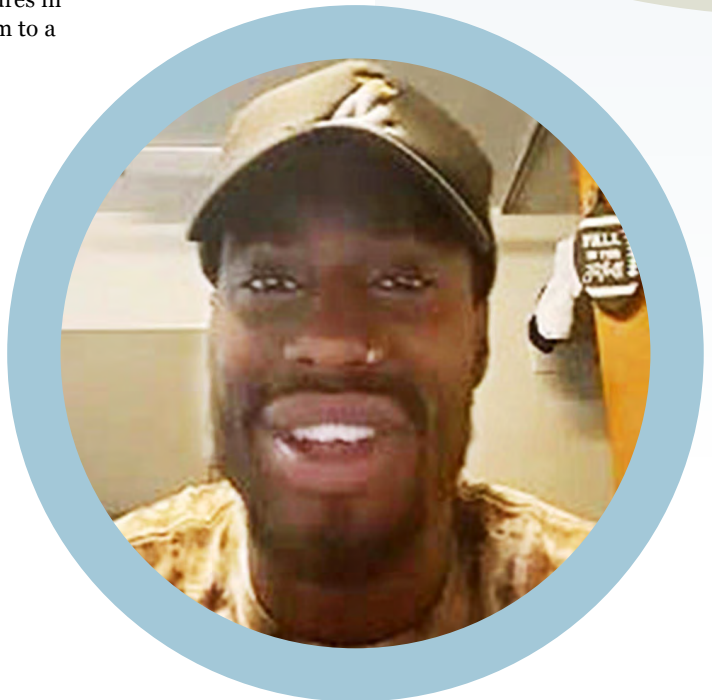
May, of East St. Louis, Illinois, chose to attend Millikin, in part, because he had high-school friends who went there. Plus, he spoke with professors teaching criminal justice and believed he could do well at a small college such as Millikin. When he started his college career, May's long-term goal was to become a lawyer, like family members who are either lawyers or work in the legal profession. "But since I have been exposed to more here at school, I've also thought about criminal investigating," May says. He has discussed with professors possibilities such as attending law school, becoming a lawyer and perhaps working as a criminal investigator for an agency such as the FBI, he says.

May joined the Peer Mentoring Program at Millikin in his freshman year. His mentor was Jaylen Williams, someone he knew in high school. May's mentor was especially helpful following the death of his grandfather, Walter Jefferson. "He was the only male influence I ever had in my life. I would say I struggled a lot with his death last year," said May, who says his mother and grandmother are important family figures in his life. He also says his mentor helped connect him to a counselor to help with anxiety issues.

"I don't think I'd be in the same position right now if I didn't join this program or just have mentors in general," May says. "Even before I knew I was going to be in the program, (Jaylen) was already mentoring me in a way. He gave me his cell phone number, whenever I needed something, he was there. Just to even point in the right direction, those type of things really helped."

May is especially grateful for donors who make possible the Peer Mentoring Program on 12 ACI-affiliated campuses, including Millikin. "Everybody needs help sometimes, you know? The good you put in something or someone will always come back to you. So, I feel like doing good for people goes a long way. You never really know how far it will go," he says.

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## Reese Hill Monmouth College

### McGraw Foundation Student Emergency Assistance Fund



Reese Hill began her college search with certain expectations. She sought a safe, small campus, a place where she can find resources or get to help to find them, and a place where she could pursue her passions for theatre and education. Monmouth College was one of two schools that “checked all the boxes,” says Hill, who is from Kansas City, Missouri. Hill, who has an older sister, is now a sophomore majoring in theatre education with an art endorsement.

Monmouth College and the city that bears the same name, have been ideal, she says. “I love it here at Monmouth,” Hill says. “I really like it because it is one of those towns where everybody knows everybody. If I need help, or I need to find a resource to help me with my work or something like that, there are already so many connections that I already have to complete my goal.”

Since the sixth grade, Hill has been involved in theatre. “When I saw that Monmouth had a theatre education program, I said ‘well there’s two of my biggest things that I love put together,’ so I figured that being a theatre education major, I could in turn help future students discover their love and passion for theatre that I have.” Beyond college, Hill hopes to earn teaching certifications in Illinois and Missouri. Graduate school is also a possibility for Hill, and she may seek a career teaching theatre at the college level.

Hill pays tuition and expenses herself. To assist, Monmouth College chose her and awarded Hill a grant from the McGraw Foundation Student Emergency Assistance Fund, made available through ACL. “It was something I was over the moon about,” she says. “One of the best things about the scholarship that I received is that my monthly payment for school got taken down almost \$150 per month, which has helped me a lot. I don’t have to work as many hours on campus now, and that can allow me to put more energy and more practice time into my studies and my extracurriculars.”

Donors, who make scholarships and emergency financial aid possible, are important to students, Hill says. “It can really have an impact on a student in their life, because a little bit of financial help can go a long way, especially to those of us who have to pay for our school and have additional financial needs. “I’m just really, really grateful that I got this scholarship.”

**“One of the best things about the scholarship that I received is that my monthly payment for school got taken down almost \$150 per month. I don’t have to work as many hours on campus now, and that can allow me to put more energy and more practice time into my studies and my extracurriculars.”**



## Cameron Steele

### Olivet Nazarene University

#### ACI General Scholarship

Cameron Steele decided early in high school that he wanted to be an engineer. In school, he liked math, and later he developed an interest in chemistry, and began thinking about these as career choices. Influenced by a cousin who studied theology, and his older brother, Aaron, who studied civil engineering at Olivet Nazarene University, Steele also chose to attend Olivet Nazarene, where he is completing a degree in chemical engineering.

A senior from Mt. Vernon, Illinois, Steele says conversations with professors and other students are made much easier at a small university such as Olivet Nazarene – especially critical for an engineering student. “At Olivet, that’s something I can do particularly with my engineering professor whom I have conversations with day-to-day,” he says.

After graduating in May 2023, Steele sees himself working in industry, most likely in a processing or manufacturing plant. While at the university, he says he has learned much from summer internships related to his major. Steele has worked at a soil-and-water-testing facility and Continental Tire Co., a well-known vehicle tire manufacturer. Most recently, he began work with CSL Behring, a pharmaceutical company.

To fund his education, Steele says he has benefitted from federal grants, Olivet Nazarene scholarships, three ACI General Scholarships and tuition help from his parents. That funding, plus some money he earns himself from working a few hours per week, have made it possible for him to concentrate on his studies. “I have friends that work 40-hour work weeks while remaining a full-time college student, and I look at them, and I can’t believe they do what they do,” he says. “I would hate to have to be working full-time and not getting the most out of my education. I think that’s where I would be if I didn’t have the scholarships, particularly the ACI scholarship.”

“I’d just like to thank people, and particularly thank the donors and the people who make (scholarships) possible, and just let them know how much stress they take off,” Steele says. “What I would say to someone who has helped make scholarships possible is that you really help improve the life of a college student. A lot of people say, ‘college is the best four years of your life.’ I think every college student deserves to have that social time, that social aspect of the university where they’re on campus with people their age. I think you’re giving people that time to have community, and not have to work and also focus on education.”

**“I’d just like to thank people, and particularly thank the donors and the people who make (scholarships) possible, and just let them know how much stress they take off.”**



## Leslie Barrera Principia College

### A. Montgomery Ward Foundation Scholarship



Leslie Barrera wants to open her own business after college. To reach her goal, she is studying business administration at Principia College. Now a junior, Barrera came to Principia from Houston, recruited by a former soccer coach, and is now a goalkeeper for the college's women's soccer team. She also plays on the college's softball team.

Barrera chose Principia to challenge herself and adapt to a different environment. "Principia is a small campus and community, which I really love," she says. "I grew up in a big community, so I just wanted to try and see more of small community." Plus, the scenic nature of the Principia College campus was an attraction, with its bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, Barrera says.

Business administration offers many opportunities in the workforce, she says. Her father works in the heating and cooling industry, which interests Barrera. She is also considering possible careers in real estate or sports.

Barrera is the oldest of three children and a first-generation student. The college awarded her an A. Montgomery Ward Foundation Scholarship, available through ACL, to help finance her college education. That has helped her focus more on school. "As a student, I would feel a bit more pressure about working, instead of focusing on my studies. With the scholarship, it gives me the opportunity to focus more on my academics. It also gives me the opportunity to keep playing soccer," Barrera says.

She is grateful for those whose donations made her scholarship possible. "It takes a big heart to give back," Barrera says. "Being first generation, having to figure out things on your own, what career path, what scholarships to apply for ... It's a handful for first-generation students that I can relate to. It takes some weight off my shoulders, and I'm grateful for what they do."

One day, Barrera says she hopes to be in a position to help first-generation students. "Not many Hispanic students are able to get help or support to attend college. I have some friends that have struggled through that," she says. "So going toward the future and thinking about helping others, friends, family attend colleges and pursue what they dream of, is what I strive for as well."

**"As a student, I would feel a bit more pressure about working, instead of focusing on my studies. With the scholarship, it gives me the opportunity to focus more on my academics. It also gives me the opportunity to keep playing soccer."**

## Joachim “Gabe” Calalang Rockford University

### The Michele and Peter Willmott Fund for Minority Student Leadership Scholarship

Joachim “Gabe” Calalang lives by a motto tattooed on his arm, “Heart Over Height,” which he says encourages him, especially as a basketball player. Calalang played in high school and has been part of the Rockford University men’s basketball team the past three seasons. “I’m 5-6. I’m a point guard,” he says. “Heart Over Height means that it doesn’t matter how tall you are, where you go, or where you’re from. If you have heart, nothing can stop you.” Those same words encourage Calalang in life and in his work to earn a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

Calalang, the oldest of three brothers, is from Sterling, Virginia. He will graduate in May 2023. He chose Rockford because he wanted to continue to play basketball in college. He wanted to go to college out of state, the coaches were interested in him, and Rockford had the nursing major. He liked the school’s small community and close connections with professors.

His interest in nursing was influenced by his parents, who are “great role models,” he says. “They both work in the medical field. I aspire to be just like them. They’ve been great parents to me. They’re so positive and outgoing and proactive, and I just want to be just like them.” Calalang’s mother is a charge nurse in a hospital, and his father is a medical supply coordinator.

After college, Calalang says he wants to work in a hospital setting, possibly in the mental health field. Because of his basketball career, he’s also interested in working with athletes. “I like taking care of people, and I like being there for others,” he says. “Whether it’s just talking with them or just helping them with an ankle sprain. Because I’ve been through numerous injuries myself. So, I know how it is. I feel like the experience of doing sports, and being in my third semester of nursing school, I’ve learned a lot, so I really want to be involved with sports as well.”

To help his college experience, Calalang is the recipient of The Michele and Peter Willmott Fund for Minority Student Leadership Scholarship, through ACI. The news was a pleasant surprise. “I woke up one morning and saw that pop up in my email. I was excited. It just shows that if you don’t give up, you’re going to get something,” he says.

“Receiving a scholarship is like a blessing,” Calalang says. “It means a lot to me because I know financially, some people aren’t blessed as I am to get a scholarship.”

He is especially appreciative of the donors who made his scholarship possible. “Being mentioned as one of the people to receive a scholarship, it means to keep working. To have that never-satisfied mentality, to realize if you keep working hard, you’re going to get somewhere. So, I really thank that person for recognizing what I’ve done for the community and on campus, and I really look forward to influencing other people.”

Because of nursing clinicals this year, Calalang is working work as a student assistant for the men’s team.

**“Being mentioned as one of the people to receive a scholarship, it means to keep working. To have that never-satisfied mentality, to realize if you keep working hard, you’re going to get somewhere.”**





**Mayra Quea**  
**Trinity Christian College**  
**ACI General Scholarship**

Mayra Quea came to the United States as a child from Peru with her parents. Her background led to an interest in learning about diverse cultures and perspectives. That is a reason she chose to major in history at Trinity Christian College, with a pre-law minor. For Quea, learning about various cultures closely relates to her interest in law.

A first-generation college student, she lives with her parents in Northbrook, Illinois. Now a junior, Quea says a friend invited her to visit Trinity Christian College. God was calling her to Trinity Christian, Quea says, adding she could see herself at the campus café, taking classes and living in a dorm on campus. “It was a push or a nudge in the right direction,” she says.

One big draw is that the student-professor ratio is about 12:1, Quea says. “It’s really amazing that our professors take the time to get to know us, to learn our names instead of being in a classroom with 200-plus students and having lectures. There are so many people from different backgrounds, so that’s pretty awesome,” she says.

Quea plans to attend law school after earning a bachelor’s degree and has an interest in immigration law. “After graduating law school and passing my bar exam, I think I’d like to work for the first two-to-three years in a company. Then after working in a company, getting experience, I will go back to school to get a business degree, because I want to open up my own firm,” Quea says.

Along the way, an ACI General Scholarship helped her remain in school. “My family went through a long period of financial hardship. There was major talk of me not going back to Trinity because I could not personally afford it, and my parents could not help me out anymore,” she says

“So, receiving this ACI scholarship was a true blessing, and I’m super grateful for it because without this, I would not be here,” Quea says. “I know there are a lot of kids out there like me that go through financial hardship, who are paying for college on their own, and their parents cannot pay for all college or they’re not getting enough scholarships.”

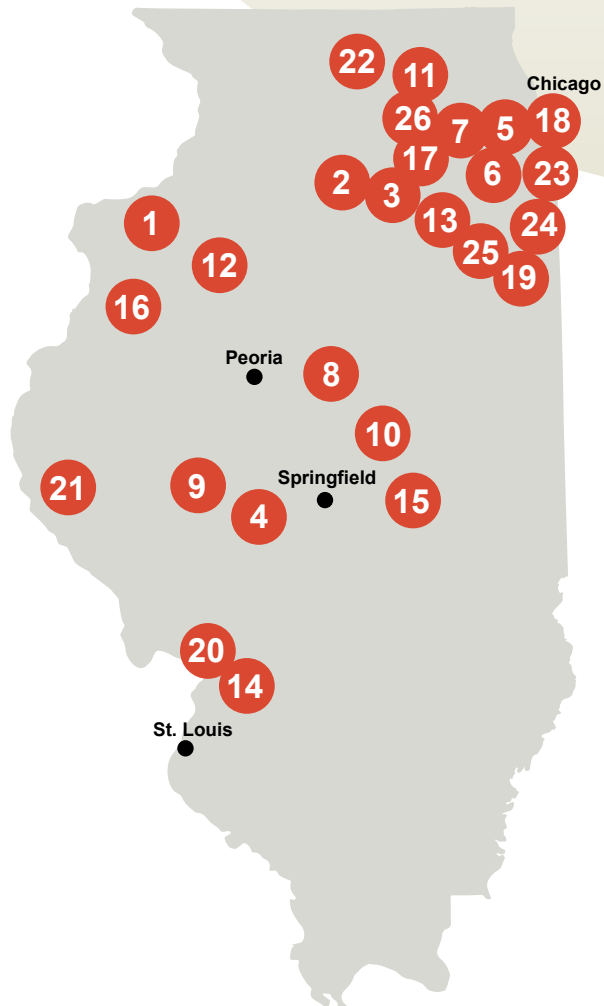
To Quea, the ACI scholarship is an “amazing” opportunity. “It’s a beautiful thing, given to those that really need it,” she adds.

**“So, receiving this ACI scholarship was a true blessing, and I’m super grateful for it because without this, I would not be here.”**

## Member Colleges and Universities

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

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



# ACI Leadership

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## ACI Programs

### College to Career

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

- **Work and Life Skills Boot Camps**

Boot camps help equip students to meet employers' expectations and build rewarding lives and careers. These sessions help students with job searches, networking, interviewing and workplace performance, as well as managing personal finances. Initial funding for this program was provided by a First Opportunity Partners grant from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) with support from the UPS Foundation.

- **Career Leaders**

This collaborative program is designed to provide underserved, high-achieving college seniors with a year of comprehensive training and support in developing business, social and leadership skills to help secure entry-level positions leading to meaningful careers. The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), Washington, D.C. committed \$18,000 to help fund ACI's Career Leaders Program. Funds were provided through a First Opportunity Partners grant from CIC, with support from the UPS Foundation, contingent upon ACI raising additional funds.

- **Career Mentoring**

Upper-class students at member institutions develop mentoring relationships with successful business professionals who help them guide them through the basics of business etiquette and other key success factors. Initial funding for this program was provided by a National Venture Fund grant from the CIC.

- **Micro-Internships**

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

### Emergency Financial Aid Program

ACI meets the financial needs of students facing unanticipated hardships that can disrupt their academic studies. This aid, through the McGraw Foundation Student Emergency Assistance Fund, enables students from low-to-moderate-income families the opportunity to continue their studies without interruption. During the 2021-2022 academic year, ACI provided \$97,500 in funding to member schools that helped 36 students. The average funding given per student was \$2,604.

### Peer Mentoring Program

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

### Professional Development Program

ACI provides professional development opportunities to member college and university staff through twice-yearly virtual conferences serving four special interest groups: advancement, finance, public relations and marketing, and student engagement.

### Scholarship Program

ACI supports underserved students attending member colleges and universities. In the 2021-2022 academic year, ACI provided funds to member schools that helped 244 students with \$403,290 in scholarships, funded by companies, foundations and individuals. The average scholarship amount was \$1,694. Scholarship figures do not include emergency financial aid support.

# Financial Information

## for June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022

Financial information is presented for ACI’s fiscal year ending May 31, 2022. Desmond & Ahern, Ltd., Certified Public Accountants, issued ACI an unmodified opinion on the financial statements.

As of May 31, total assets were \$1,061,635, while liabilities were \$301,726. Total Net Assets were \$759,909.

Gifts, awards and other services totaling \$759,532 were distributed to members during the year.

### Abbreviated Statement of Financial Position

#### Assets

Cash	\$249,728
Accounts Receivable	59,900
Investments	535,077
Property and equipment (net)	4,047
Other assets	<u>212,883</u>
Total assets	\$1,061,635

#### Liabilities

Scholarships and other distributions	\$284,290
Other liabilities	17,436
Net assets	<u>759,909</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	\$1,061,635

### Abbreviated Statement of Activities

#### Support and revenue

Contributions	\$558,992
Member assessments	584,990
Corporate partnerships	65,725
Investment income (net)	(37,989)
Other income	<u>81,966</u>
Total support and revenue	\$1,253,684

#### Expenses

Gifts, awards and other services to members	759,532
Other programs	130,955
Management and general	210,929
Fundraising	<u>280,400</u>
Total expenses	<u>1,381,816</u>
Change in net assets	<u>\$(128,132)</u>

## Honor Roll of Donors

**Associated Colleges of Illinois gratefully recognizes the commitment of individuals, foundations, and corporations who made contributions between June 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022. Thank you!**

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## Memorable Words

“When I was at an ACI school, I never envisioned I would have this power to do such great things. But I do remember the educators, the teachers and the students who are with me and gave me my voice while I was getting my education. That education was very important to me.”

### **Tracie Morris**

U.S. Chief Human Resources Officer  
and Chief Inclusion Officer  
BMO Harris Financial Group

“I was super, super thankful to find out the (ACI) scholarship was available. Honestly, thank you so much. It’s been a big help, and I appreciate you, the donors, everybody. It’s just been a weight off the shoulders.”

### **Bethsaida Rodriguez**

ACI General Scholarship  
Judson University

“I don’t think I’d be in the same position right now if I didn’t join this program or just have mentors in general. Everybody needs help sometimes, you know? The good you put in something or someone will always come back to you.”

### **Kenyahn May**

ACI Peer Mentoring Program  
Millikin University

“One of the best things about the scholarship that I received is that my monthly payment for school got taken down almost \$150 per month, which has helped me a lot. I don’t have to work as many hours on campus now, and that can allow me to put more energy and more practice time into my studies and my extracurriculars.”

### **Reese Hill**

McGraw Foundation Student  
Emergency Assistance Fund  
Monmouth College

“Receiving a scholarship is like a blessing. It means a lot to me because I know financially, some people aren’t blessed as I am to get a scholarship. It just shows that if you don’t give up, you’re going to get something.”

### **Joachim “Gabe” Calalang**

The Michele and Peter Willmott Fund for  
Minority Student Leadership Scholarship  
Rockford University



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