



Associated Colleges of Illinois

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.

ANNUAL REPORT 2018 - 2019

Thank you

Dear Friends:

We're excited about ACI's progress in the past year. For 67 years, the organization has provided significant financial and program support to colleges and universities across Illinois. As we enter a new decade, ACI's 26 member colleges and universities stand ready to provide useful and significant educational opportunities and skills to the more than 70,000 students they serve.

We constantly hear from employers about their workforce needs. ACI institutions meet these needs by preparing students with career knowledge, plus skills in communication, critical thinking, project management and technology. Many employers say graduates with a liberal arts and sciences education are important components in their workforces. Research shows that over time, liberal arts and sciences graduates do very well in their careers, and they are leaders in their communities.

ACI supports college students in the liberal arts and sciences through its Talent and Career Development Initiative, including an annual Career Development Conference and Employer Expo, Peer Mentoring Program, micro-internships, and jobs and internships posted on our website. This year, ACI obtained a grant to initiate a series of Work and Life Skills Boot Camps to teach valuable career and life skills to upperclass students, plus a career mentoring program for seniors is planned.

Our research shows that more than 23,000 alumni of member colleges and universities are employed at 145 of the state's top employers. And, we know that ACI and its members contribute a value of more than \$3.5 billion to the Illinois economy. These are impressive numbers that demonstrate the significance of the liberal arts and sciences as forces for economic and social good.

In addition, ACI provided financial support in scholarships and emergency funds to more than 325 students at member colleges and universities. Some of their stories are contained in the pages of this annual report. We also hosted or co-hosted more than 250 member college and university staff at professional development conferences.

We deeply appreciate your generous gifts to ACI, which support these outstanding member schools and students as they develop career and life skills – that enable them to contribute to innovation in the workplace, build careers and enjoy successful lives.



Frank D. Cella
Chair, Board of Trustees
Associated Colleges of Illinois



Jamel SC Wright, Ph.D.
President
Associated Colleges of Illinois



Mick Weltman
Executive Director
Associated Colleges of Illinois

ACI Highlights 2018-2019



ACI's three-month research project showed more than 23,000 alumni of member schools working for 145 top Illinois employers.

ACI Employment Data Shows More Than 23,000 ACI Alumni Working for Top Companies

More than 23,000 alumni of Illinois independent colleges and universities are working for 145 top employers throughout the state, according to findings from a three-month research project conducted by Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI).

The statistics were compiled from LinkedIn profiles by students working in ACI's micro-internship program. The data include how many students from each member institution are employed at each of the 145 companies.

"We focused on students who stay in Illinois and attend ACI-affiliated colleges and universities," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "We found that tens of thousands of students, most of whom study the liberal arts and sciences, are getting outstanding jobs with great companies right here in Illinois."

Employers consistently say they are looking for students who can communicate well, solve problems, think critically, lead project-based teams and adapt well to workplace changes. "These are the skills ACI members teach every day, and it is why their students move into successful careers," Weltman said.

ACI's overall purpose is to help students earn degrees and develop successful careers and lives, Weltman said. "We also want our work to help improve the Illinois economy by maintaining helpful relationships with employers, showing them the value students from ACI colleges and universities bring to the workplace," he added.

This project was funded by a Capacity-Building Grant from The Council of Independent Colleges, Washington, D.C.

ACI Colleges and Universities Provide Significant Economic Impact, Data Show

ACI's 26 member colleges and universities contribute more than \$3.5 billion to the Illinois economy and put more than 34,000 employees into the state's workforce. The member schools, which enroll more than 67,000 students, also provide nearly \$900 million in financial aid. That data and more, compiled by ACI, is available on the ACI website at <https://acifund.org/member-school-data/>, the Member School Data page.

"The data show these colleges and universities have a critical role in educating students and preparing them for careers in the today's Illinois economy and in the future," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. Data is available in aggregated form, as well as individual data per member college or university. ACI's compilation includes several data points about its members:

- Demographic information
- Academic programs
- Employment statistics after graduation
- State economic impact and jobs
- Financial aid provided by each institution

The data, to be updated annually, was compiled over several months using publicly available sources. Sources included member schools' own websites, plus data from the Federation of Independent Colleges and Universities' Economic Input Calculator and the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

Associated Colleges of Illinois

Home About Events/Calendar Careers Stories and News Member Schools Programs Research Funding Contact Giving

MEMBER SCHOOL DATA

Student population: 66,916

Financial impact on state of Illinois: \$3.5 billion

Jobs provided: 34,122

Financial aid provided: \$898 million

(Scroll down for more specific data for each member college or university)

Member School	Student Population (Fall 2017)	Students Faculty Ratio	Academic Programs	Employed 2 Years After Graduation	Median Income 6 Years After Graduation	State Economic Impact	State Jobs	Total Financial Aid per School	Percentage of Students Receiving Financial Aid	Average Financial Aid per student
Augustana College	2,647	12:1	71 majors	96%	\$52,000	\$163,021,300	1,948	\$71,644,119	99%	\$27,832
Benedictine University	5,100	17:1	55 majors	91%	\$49,000	\$299,510,532	2,792	\$40,785,167	99%	\$18,272
Blackburn College	554	11:1	48 majors	93%	\$37,400	\$33,836,802	318	\$9,579,647	99%	\$17,610
Concordia University Chicago	5,755	11:1	75 majors	95%	\$39,700	\$219,702,362	1,854	\$24,490,133	100%	\$18,999
Dominican University	3,127	10:1	60 majors	94%	\$47,100	\$177,805,259	1,616	\$60,415,563	100%	\$20,589
Elmhurst College	3,481	14:1	73 majors	94%	\$48,300	\$188,277,439	1,723	\$60,772,084	100%	\$21,821
Eureka College	614	13:1	30 majors	96%	\$36,000	\$36,180,976	397	\$7,210,065	100%	\$11,957
Illinois College	959	11:1	36 majors	97%	\$42,800	\$66,410,378	644	\$23,008,416	100%	\$24,143
Illinois Wesleyan University	1,649	10:1	44 majors	96%	\$59,100	\$148,991,523	1,404	\$42,870,940	100%	\$25,438
Judson University	1,283	9:1	51 majors	93%	\$42,800	\$63,996,224	645	\$14,515,864	100%	\$25,556
Knox College	1,356	11:1	37 majors	91%	\$38,700	\$60,434,638	1,008	\$42,657,088	99%	\$31,983

ACI members contribute a \$3.5 billion value to the Illinois economy.

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



Students attending the 2019 ACI Career Development Conference and Employer Expo met directly with potential employers.

More than 100 students attended ACI's 2019 Career Development Conference and Employer Expo, where they had the opportunity to meet with 25 employers and graduate school representatives, and attend seminars on career paths in specific fields, plus networking, implicit bias in the workplace and financial literacy.

The students, from 13 ACI-member colleges and universities, were among 185 people who attended the day-long event Oct. 4 at ACI member North Central College in Naperville.

Students said the conference gave them a rare opportunity to speak with potential employers and learn helpful career and life skills. For example, Concordia University Chicago junior Salam Hussein came prepared with a specific list of employers she wanted to meet. "I've been looking for internships, and as a freshman, it was really difficult to get one," she said.

Malik Johnson, a junior computer science major from Rockford University, said he spoke with employers about internships and with graduate school representatives about earning a master's degree. "People here are willing to talk to you about their companies, presenting themselves while I'm trying to present myself as well. That's a good experience for me," he said.

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

Employers were pleased with many of the student candidates they met. "I've spoken to many viable candidates whom I'd definitely hire," said Stephanie Douglass of State Farm Insurance Co. She also said the event speakers and skill-building sessions were "super helpful" for students. Omar Coronado and Alexis Salvador, representing Wells Fargo, said they told students about the company's internships and

collected several resumes for company recruiters. "It's great to see the level of engagement and students taking the next step," said Coronado. "We've been able to give feedback and discuss career paths."

Students heard a variety of speakers who discussed relevant skills and workplace topics. Michelle Silverthorn, CEO, Inclusion Nation, a diversity consulting firm, said that to transform workplaces to diverse and inclusive spaces, leaders must design them centered on courage, authenticity and belonging. She cited examples of how differently people experience upward mobility in their firms, depending on gender and race. J.D. Gershbein, CEO, Owlsh Communications, spoke about building professional networks. Personal branding, he said, differentiates a person from others, and LinkedIn is a key social media site for building networks and branding.

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

Employers/exhibitors

ALPFA (*Assoc. of Latino Professionals for America*)
Aon

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Illinois

Buckeye International

Call One

CBRE

Central Intelligence Agency

CME Group

Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Inc.

Dayton Freight Lines

Environmental Design International

Fifth Third Bank

Inclusion Nation

Marsh

Northwestern Mutual

Owlsh Communications

Shure

State Farm

Wells Fargo

WestCare/Sheridan Correctional Center

Wintrust

Graduate programs

Dominican University

Lewis University

North Central College

Saint Xavier University

Seminar sponsors

Baker Tilly

Upkey

ACI will host the next Career Development Conference and Employer Expo in October 2020.

Work and Life Skills Boot Camps Will Support Students at ACI Colleges and Universities

Students of color, low-income and first-generation students at ACI member institutions will benefit from Work and Life Skills Boot Camps, a new project ACI launched in 2019. The project was funded in part through a \$19,050 First Opportunity Partners matching grant from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) with support from the UPS Foundation and Wells Fargo, which provided a significant grant.

The Saturday morning boot camps, designed to support campus career services programs, began in fall 2019 and offer students intensive instruction in resumé development, interviewing/presentation skills, workplace technology skills, and financial literacy and career paths in financial services.

“Students from low-income backgrounds or who are first in their families to graduate college have few role models in their lives who can offer career advice and support for job searches,” says Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. “ACI boot camps help bridge that gap and give underserved students a better chance at launching satisfying careers after they graduate.”

In 2019-20, ACI plans to offer three boot camps: two in the metro Chicago area and one outside Chicago.



Work and Life Skills Boot Camps help upper-level students prepare for successful careers.



Member college and university students can view listings for jobs and internships on the ACI website.

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

ACI is posting jobs and internships on the ACI website to be seen by students ACI serves at its 26 member colleges and universities. Posting a job or internship is easy -- visit ACI's website at <https://acifund.org/jobs-internships/>, complete the form we've provided for employers, send us your company logo, and we'll post the announcement for free.

In addition, ACI has partnered with Parker Dewey to provide paid micro-internships for college students and recent grads. These micro-internships are a great way to gain professional experience through short-term, paid assignments. To learn about micro-internships, visit <http://info.parkerdewey.com/ac>.

ACI Leaders, Educators, Illinois Business Leaders, Meet at Midwest Roundtable on Talent

Presidents from five ACI member colleges and universities, several Illinois business leaders and ACI Executive Director Mick Weltman attended the 2019 Midwest Roundtable on Talent at the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, Michigan, June 30 to July 2.

Since 2013, the Michigan Colleges Alliance has hosted the meeting, which brings together business leaders and private higher education leaders. They discuss new ways of preparing college students for success in the modern workplace.

This year's event brought together representatives from more than 60 leading companies and some 45 college and university presidents, with the theme “Fostering the Entrepreneurial Mindset.” ACI will participate in the 2020 Midwest Roundtable on Talent, also at Mackinac Island.



ACI Co-sponsors U.S.-Mexico Higher Education Summit



April 24-27, 2019, in Chicago, organized by the Council of Independent Colleges, Washington, D.C., and co-sponsored by ACI.

More than 50 higher education leaders participated in the U.S.-Mexico Higher Education Summit,

Higher education leaders from the U.S. and Mexico held discussions on innovation in internationalization, student-faculty exchange programs, cross-border agreements, global leadership and undocumented students. The group learned about or visited several ACI members, including Augustana College, Dominican University, North Central College, North Park University and Rockford University.

St. Augustine College Joins ACI

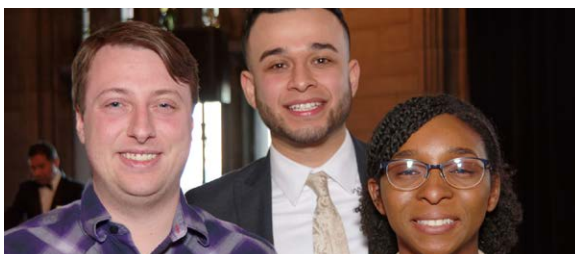
ACI added St. Augustine College, Chicago, as a member in 2019, bringing membership to 26 colleges and universities.

Founded in 1980, SAC is the first bilingual institution of higher education in Illinois (and one of only two in the U.S.) to make higher education accessible to a diverse student population. Its emphasis is on those of Hispanic descent to strengthen ethnic identity, reinforce cultural interaction and fill cultural, educational and socio-economic gaps. SAC applies the liberal arts and sciences with a career-oriented focus, enabling students to apply knowledge and skills productively in work-related settings and in all of life's responsibilities. SAC's enrollment is 1,529 students. Dr. Reyes González is president.



St. Augustine College, Chicago, is one of only two bilingual institutions of higher education in the U.S.

ACI's Benefit Reception Raises Record Funds to Support Underserved Students



Student scholarship recipients highlighted the 2019 ACI Benefit Reception, including, from left, Jordan Bruster, Rockford University, Jorge Palacios, Concordia University Chicago, and TaCoya Harris, North Central College.

Thanks to generous sponsors, donors and attendees, Associated Colleges of Illinois' 2019 Benefit Reception broke previous fundraising and attendance records. The April 12 event at the University Club of Chicago raised more than \$110,000 in gross receipts, with 179 attendees, outpacing the past three ACI fundraising events.

Leading Benefit Reception sponsors were Gallagher and Husch Blackwell, both patron-level sponsors. Partner-level sponsors were Aon, Baker Tilly, Don Campbell, Rathje Woodward LLC and Robbin Schwartz. "We are deeply grateful to all who supported our annual fundraiser and ACI's member colleges and universities," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "Proceeds from the Benefit Reception support ACI's scholarships, peer mentoring on 11 member campuses and career development programs."

Stories told by student speakers highlighted the evening program. Jordan Bruster, Corpus Christi, Texas, said, "Rockford University was the best choice for me. I believe that we would not be able to go to college or pursue a degree and our dreams if it weren't for programs like ACI."

TaCoya Harris, from Peoria, is part of the ACI Peer Mentoring Program at North Central College, Naperville. She said she has benefited from being a mentee. "What's the point of giving disadvantaged youth the opportunity to go to college if they aren't given the guidance they need when they get there?" asked Harris, a computer science major.

Jorge Palacios, Berwyn, graduated in business management at Concordia University Chicago. As a mentor in the ACI Peer Mentoring Program at Concordia, Palacios said he is grateful for the opportunity to help teach a new generation of students. "Being a mentor for the program has created the best way to end my college career," he said.

Illinois State Treasurer Michael W. Frerichs told his own story of being a first-generation student at Yale University. Now, as treasurer, Frerichs manages investments for two Illinois college-savings programs, Bright Start and Bright Directions, both of which have earned top ratings from Morningstar.

"I know how transformative higher education is in the lives of our young people," said Frerichs, noting ACI's focus on first-generation, low-income students. "Make a commitment, because there is intelligence and talent that will benefit all of us if we just give them the opportunities for higher education. It makes a world of difference." ACI's 2020 Benefit Reception will be held Friday, April 17, at the University Club of Chicago.

New Named Scholarships



Several new named scholarships were established with ACI during the 2018-2019 fiscal year. These scholarships support deserving

students enrolled at ACI's 26 member colleges and universities, while providing significant recognition for the individual, business or organization for which the scholarship is named. Donors may choose the name of the scholarship, set the amount and duration, and direct scholarships to support specific majors or career paths.

ACI member colleges and universities offered these new scholarships in 2018-2019:

• **Carmin and Tina Iosue Scholarship:** Recipients must have the potential to excel in one subject area and are recommended by a professor. Students write about why the scholarship will help them excel and report on their progress at the end of the school year.

• **KRD (Kutchens, Robbins & Diamond, Ltd.) CPAs and Advisors Scholarship:** Recipients must be accounting or finance majors at Lewis University, Romeoville, be first-generation students and possess a 3.0 grade point average.

• **SmithGroup Scholarship:** Recipients must be first-generation students at Lewis University and major in health care or nursing.

• **MD Designs Inc. Scholarship:** Recipients must attend Millikin University, Decatur, and be business, communication or marketing majors.

• **Paccar Foundation Scholarship:** Recipients must demonstrate unmet financial need.

In addition to these scholarships, existing scholarship awards are also provided through ACI to member schools. These are the ACI General Scholarship, A. Montgomery Ward Scholarship, Call One Scholarship, The Deborah M. Sawyer and Leslie J. Sawyer Outstanding STEM Student Award, McGraw Emergency Financial Aid and Michelle and Peter Willmott Minority Student Leadership Fund award.

Eureka College and North Central College Join ACI Peer Mentoring Program

ACI's Peer Mentoring Program welcomed two additional campuses this fiscal year to its statewide network: Eureka College, Eureka, and North Central College, Naperville. The schools launched peer mentoring teams in 2018, after securing their places in the program through a grant competition. Each college was funded for at least two peer mentoring teams.

ACI's Peer Mentoring Program seeks to increase college graduation rates among low-income, first-generation college students and students of color. To accomplish this goal, the program supports students who arrive at ACI member institutions with risk factors that could prevent them from staying in school and reaching graduation. To counter those risks -- from financial and educational inequities to lack of family experience with higher education — ACI matches these freshmen with trained peer mentors recruited from sophomores, juniors and seniors who faced similar challenges as freshmen.

With the addition of Eureka College and North Central College, and the renewal of programs at the campuses already participating, ACI's 2019-2020 Peer Mentoring Program serves 156 students, including 130 mentees and 26 mentors. The 11 ACI Peer Mentoring Program campuses are:

- Augustana College, Rock Island
- Blackburn College, Carlinville
- Concordia University Chicago, River Forest
- Dominican University, River Forest
- Eureka College, Eureka
- Millikin University, Decatur



The ACI Peer Mentoring Program grew to 11 member campuses in 2018-2019.

- Monmouth College, Monmouth
- North Central College, Naperville
- North Park University, Chicago
- Quincy University, Quincy
- Rockford University, Rockford

ACI's Peer Mentoring Program is funded by grants from the Council of Independent Colleges, the Siragusa Foundation, ITW Foundation and BNSF Foundation, as well as sponsorships and individual contributions secured through ACI's Annual Benefit Reception.



Danielle Brantley

Saint Xavier University
ACI General Scholarship
Major: English, Special Education

Danielle Brantley returned to Chicago's Saint Xavier University this year for graduate school, studying to be a learning behavior specialist in special education. From Chicago's south side, Brantley says what first drew her to study English as an undergraduate at Saint Xavier was that the school welcomed students from all backgrounds.

"I believe that literacy is very important," she says. Brantley says people who can read and write well can become poets, short-story writers, journalists, critics, teach the classics or formulate legal arguments, regardless of the language. She's also an avid reader. Brantley hopes to work as a special educator in the Chicago public school system, where she can mentor students who may not have access to sufficient resources.

As an ACI General Scholarship recipient, Brantley explained she had an outstanding balance on her undergraduate bill as she grew closer to graduation. Her mother was seriously ill and had been hospitalized. She recovered, but the situation took a financial toll on the family. Without the ACI funds, Brantley would not have been able to graduate in the spring. She adds she is grateful for donors who donate their time and money to make scholarships possible.

"Receiving that scholarship – it was divine intervention because I was very unsure of how I would have paid that outstanding balance."

Taylor Ludwick

Quincy University
ACI General Scholarship
Major: English



Originally, Taylor Ludwick of Moberly, Missouri, wanted to attend a big college in the South, Louisiana State University. But she and her mother thought it would be best to consider colleges in other places. Ludwick visited Quincy University, and she liked the campus and its location near the Mississippi River. Ludwick was sold – and came to Quincy to study English.

But that's not the end of the story. Ludwick, a sophomore, recently changed to a double major in middle grades literacy and elementary education. "I want to impact the most people," she says. "I've always loved younger kids. I started working with kindergartners when I was 12. I've always had a love for teachers. I thought they were the most impactful people in my life." Now, she's focused on a career as a public school teacher, following in her own footsteps as a product of public schools.

Financing her education is a challenge. She's the youngest daughter in her family, and college is expensive. "I could not afford coming here, and I knew that. So, my mom told me I had to base everything off scholarships," Ludwick says. Among other sources of funds, Ludwick attends Quincy as part of a work-study program. Ludwick also qualified for an ACI General Scholarship.

"If I didn't get the scholarship, I would have been at a loss where I would have attained money for anything like that," she says. She is also grateful for donors. "They're definitely helping everybody whenever they donate the money. It's allowing all of us to further our educations so that we can then also donate."



Bethany Anderson

Olivet Nazarene University
ACI General Scholarship
Major: Social Work

One of the reasons that Bethany Anderson chose to attend Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois, is that it had a marching band. "I thought that was great," she says. Anderson explained she was home-schooled, and it was in high school that she was finally able to participate in a musical ensemble and play the flute. Her favorite ensemble was marching band, and she wanted to continue in college, she says. Another reason that Anderson chose Olivet Nazarene is the school offered her major, social work, and the university offered a Christian education with a biblical worldview, she says.

Now a junior, Anderson thought she'd like to be an elementary school teacher, but when she read a description of social work, she realized it fit her interests better. "You're able to help people in so many different ways," she says, citing examples such as working in hospitals, schools or government agencies.

After college, Anderson sees herself working in emergency management or possibly working abroad with an emergency relief organization. "I would really love to work in the mission field. Part of social work is being so hopeful that you can bring hope to people who are in low places in their life," she says. Anderson, who is from Crystal Lake, Illinois, is grateful to be an ACI General Scholarship recipient.

"Hearing that I had gotten that scholarship meant so much to me, because it meant that someone had seen me and seen my life and seen my story. Getting the scholarship has made such a difference for me because it has allowed me to continue my education here at Olivet."

Iga Szelag

North Park University
ACI Peer Mentoring Program
Major: Accounting



Iga Szelag is a first-generation student at North Park University, Chicago. Born in Poland, she moved to the United States when she was two years old and lives in Niles, Illinois. Szelag is an accounting major, with hopes of one day becoming a Certified Public Accountant (CPA).

She wanted to attend a small college in the Chicago area, and like many friends, she visited North Park and liked what she saw. Szelag got involved in ACI's Peer Mentoring Program at North Park. She decided to become a peer mentor as a way to return her appreciation for mentors that had helped her. "I did my mentoring the first year, and it was a great experience. Because it was so great, I came back to be another mentor again," she says. Plus, she says she has learned a lot by interacting with mentees.

"One of my mentees -- I remember she had a really hard time. She wasn't from Illinois. She was from out of state a couple of hours away. She had a hard time adjusting and the homesickness, and I took the role of always saying hi and checking on her to make sure she was doing OK," Szelag says. "As a mentor for me it was important to make sure they're not alone during that time, during that transition. So, I always made sure they were still coming out to the different activities that we had planned for the day and that they would come out to dinner and still socialize with everyone. College isn't the easiest thing. It can be intense."

Despite her parents' limited knowledge about college, it is important to them that Szelag and her older brother attend college and earn degrees. "They put in the sacrifice because they know that me and my brother will have careers after we graduate," she says, adding that the North Park staff has been enormously helpful to her.

TaCoya Harris

North Central College
ACI Peer Mentoring Program
Major: Computer Science



TaCoya Harris, a freshman at North Central College, is studying computer science with a minor in philosophy. "I'm studying computer science because I'd like to be a software developer. I really like coding and testing out software, and creating it," she says. "It's a powerful skill to have."

Harris, from Peoria, Illinois, learned about North Central through a tennis coach. Once she visited, Harris says she knew it was the right size and atmosphere for her. A first-generation college student, Harris is the first in her family in a couple of generations to attend a four-year college. She also earned a ROTC four-year scholarship and hopes to be an example to younger family members who will follow in her footsteps.

Harris comes from a single-mother household. A big help, she says, is the ACI Peer Mentoring Program at North Central College. "It's programs like this that really comfort you to know that they're available to you, that there's people on campus, upperclassmen, who you can go to and ask for help," she says. "They've been through their first years as first-generation students, and they know." For example, Harris says her peer mentor helped her understand the college's work-study program and its benefits.

"It makes me feel like I belong," Harris says of the Peer Mentoring Program and other participants. "Even though we're a small percentage together, we know each other, and we share similar experiences on campus."



Brandon Skovronski

Monmouth College
ACI General Scholarship
Major: Kinesiology/Exercise Science

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

From nearby Aledo, Illinois, Skovronski is a kinesiology major, focused on becoming a physical therapist and hoping to attend PT school after college.

"I love sports medicine, so I would want to be a sports medicine-physical therapy person," he says. "Probably more like an athletic trainer or a team doctor." Skovronski knows people who are physical therapists working in sports medicine, plus he's experienced physical therapy firsthand through his sports career.

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

The ACI scholarship was significant, he says.

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

Semaj Robinson

Lewis University
SmithGroup Scholarship
Major: Nursing



Semaj Robinson started college in 2016 at a Chicago university. Costs were high, and she began searching for another school to study nursing. She read good reviews about the nursing program at Lewis University in Romeoville. Plus, ACI schools graduate twice as many nursing students as other large Illinois higher ed programs combined. "After an initial conversation, I knew that this was the place I wanted to go to because they were willing to help me by any means necessary," Robinson says.

Now a senior, Robinson, who is from Markham, Illinois, expects to graduate from Lewis in May 2020. She plans a career in pediatrics, working with young children. "That's what I plan on doing, just working in a hospital and working in primarily a low-income community because that's where I came from," Robinson says.

At a young age, Robinson says she developed a passion to help people and became interested in nursing. "I lost my grandfather to cancer, and I was there for the whole process of grieving and everything. That made me feel like I wanted to do something about it," she says. Robinson also carries a Spanish minor because she is interested in languages and culture. Plus, she was able to use her knowledge of Spanish in a nursing clinical experience, communicating with a patient whose primary language was Spanish. "That correlated with the whole reason why I wanted to be a nurse," she says.

Robinson is the recipient of a SmithGroup Scholarship through ACI. "Without the scholarship, I don't know if I would be here," she says.

"I'm just very grateful for this. I've had a lot of transitions in my life, and this scholarship gave me the chance to be able to chase my dreams and to continue my journey."



Janiyah Williams

Illinois Wesleyan University
A. Montgomery Ward
Foundation Scholarship
Major: International Business

Illinois Wesleyan University was an attractive choice for Janiyah Williams, of Oak Lawn, Illinois. She had applied to several colleges and universities in Illinois and elsewhere. But she chose Illinois Wesleyan because it is not too far from her Chicago-area home, the student-teacher ratio was small and the financial aid package was helpful.

Williams, a sophomore, studies international business, with a focus on becoming an attorney specializing in international business law. "I just like international business because I want to travel, and I want to explore life outside of the U.S.," she says.

But being part of a single-parent household is a challenge when it comes to paying tuition and other college costs. Williams spoke with the university's financial aid director, Scott Seibring, about her financial situation. "He connected me with this scholarship," Williams says. "It has really helped me, because without it, I wouldn't be able to be in school. It plays a big part, along with all of my other scholarships and grants, in helping me continue to come to this school."

In addition, Williams has two on-campus jobs, working at the student center and as a teaching assistant in psychology. She is also a volunteer at Western Avenue Community Center. "It's an after-school program. It's like a block away from campus. I work with small groups of children there, and we do homework. It's really fun. I started doing it last year, and I really enjoy it," she says. Williams is pleased with her choice to Illinois Wesleyan.

"I feel like I belong here. I feel like I made the right choice. And, I'm just really happy to be here. I'm enjoying my time."

Madison Nickrent

Illinois College
McGraw Foundation Emergency
Financial Aid
Major: Elementary Education



Like many students, Madison Nickrent decided to attend Illinois College because of its small campus and the small class sizes. Now a junior majoring in elementary education, Nickrent says her classes continue to be small. "I only have six students in four of my classes, so the teacher knows how we're doing, and they really know us," she says. "For me, that's what I really wanted out of school."

Originally a psychology major, Nickrent, from Bloomington, Illinois, found her real interest was in becoming a teacher of fourth and fifth graders. She switched majors in her sophomore year. ACI schools graduate about twice as many education graduates as other major colleges and universities in Illinois combined.

In addition to teaching, Nickrent is a residential hall director at Illinois College, a learning experience related to teaching, she says. "It definitely teaches you time management, how to deal with conflict and how to deal with people who are struggling and how you can help them," Nickrent says.

About a year ago, Nickrent's father died, the result of an infection after leaving the hospital. She needed financial help to remain in school and spoke to the Financial Aid Director Becky Birdsell, who helped connect with her a McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid grant through ACI. "It's helped me this semester not having to work two jobs, to stay a student here," she says. "It freed up a lot of my time and allowed me to keep going with my education and not always worrying about how I'm going to pay for it."

The McGraw grant was critical, she says. She is one of four children. One has Down Syndrome and her younger sister is also in college now, and there are many financial challenges.

"These scholarships help students stay at the school that they want to be at and they love. It really helps the student that needs it. I would also like to say thank you so much for donating."



Michaela Young

Eureka College
Michele and Peter S. Willmott
Minority Student Leadership Award
Major: Vocal Performance

Michaela Young first learned about Eureka College through a college admissions counselor. At the time, she was a high school sophomore in Chicago. As she considered other schools, Eureka College offered her scholarship funds. When things didn't work out at other schools in Mississippi and Tennessee, she looked at nearby colleges, including Eureka. "The following week was move-in day," she recalls. "I never stepped foot on the Eureka College campus until my move-in day. I didn't know anyone at all."

Eventually, Young began to meet people and participate in activities. Four years later, she recalls getting over early stage fright through singing. "I knew my music. Singing was what I wanted to do," she says. Young cited Dr. Adriana Martinez, Dr. Joe Henry and Pamela Bates for helping her learn through singing. Along the way, she taught herself guitar and is learning piano. Being a student at Eureka has given Young a chance to sing jazz and opera.

Helping to make her singing career possible is the Michele and Peter S. Willmott Minority Student Leadership Award through ACI.

After graduation, Young plans to travel the world and sing where she can, and eventually attend graduate school.

Earning the scholarship was "like a breath of fresh air. It humbled me a lot because people around my campus are noticing that I'm actually trying to put a step forward. The scholarship took a load off of me."

Edith Mercado

Elmhurst College

ACI General Scholarship

Major: Biology



With dreams of being a physician, Edith Mercado of Genoa, Illinois, decided to study biology at Elmhurst College, with minors in environmental science and Spanish, she says. She chose Elmhurst College because of the quality of the college's science programs.

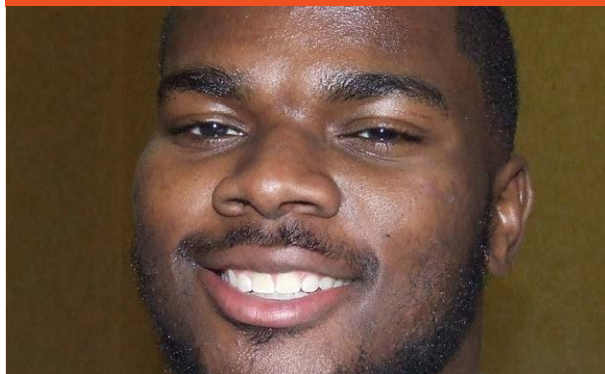
Compared to many science students, Mercado's career interests are unusual. "I want to become an optometrist," she says. "Vision is so important. You look at life through your eyes, you know." After earning her undergraduate degree, Mercado says she'd like to attend the Illinois College of Optometry in Chicago.

Mercado, a first-generation sophomore student, is a resident advisor this year, where she manages a floor in a campus residence hall. She also competes with the college's track-and-field team, as a sprinter and hurdler, which she has been doing since middle school. "I like to challenge myself physically, mentally and with classes. The feeling of overcoming that barrier is so good -- just a great feeling, which is why I love track and I love running," Mercado says.

Her ACI scholarship was helpful because she had used up other scholarships, and the tuition payments were hard to handle. Mercado is the oldest of four children in the family, including one brother and two sisters. "So, we had to pay \$4,000 last year," Mercado says. "It doesn't sound like much, but it is much coming from a family that doesn't make a lot of money. But when I found out I won the scholarship, it was such a relief because we didn't have to pay that much. It helped out with this year, too."

Like many college students, Mercado funds most of her education with grants, loans and scholarships. She is grateful for donors who contribute funds to help students. "I wouldn't be here without them," she says.

"Thank you so much for donating and realizing that there are many students like me who need the money in order to continue their education, especially first-generation students."



Xavier Jobe

Dominican University

ACI Peer Mentoring Program

Major: Biology

After graduating from Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, Illinois, Xavier Jobe expected to complete his bachelor's degree at another Chicago-area college. Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois, offered more scholarship support than other schools, and Jobe accepted its offer to attend -- ironically, the same school his parents attended when it was known as Rosary College.

A biology major, Jobe is a mentor to incoming first-generation freshmen in ACI's Peer Mentoring Program at Dominican. "I've been through a lot in life," he says. "I bring knowledge about how to pick yourself back up when you hit rock bottom, to be a better person and not disappoint the people around you -- because I did all that before."

"I'm more open, sharing my feelings and emotions," he says. "I pay attention more. I'm more understanding in situations, and I'm trying to just learn. Basically, that's the most important thing for me right now. Just learn and experience everything."

Jobe says the Peer Mentoring Program has taught him a lot, experience he shares with mentees.

As for himself, Jobe isn't certain what he'd like to do with his biology major, however, he is thinking about a career as an orthodontist, which means another year before graduation and up to three years of dental school. "Hopefully, I'll be able to open up my own practice afterwards. Right now, that's the main goal," he says.

"This is basically a gateway to help kids get through college and complete college. The mentoring program can help you open up the flood gates to know more and to know more people."

Roberto Jordan
Concordia University Chicago
ACI Peer Mentoring Program
Major: Business Management



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

Jordan is a business management major. He joined ACI’s Peer Mentoring Program at Concordia at the suggestion of his resident advisor. Plus, his mentor was also a business management major. “That was a big thing for me,” Jordan says. “I’m starting to understand how the whole process works from going from college undergraduate to being in the workforce. That’s probably the biggest benefit I could ask for – knowing how that process works, and it’s assuring to me that I have a place to make it in the workforce one day.”

Jordan is grateful for his parents, who made it possible for Jordan and his brother and sister to be successful in high school and college. “I’m really thankful for what they’ve done for us because they’ve sacrificed a lot for us to have this opportunity,” he says.

Jordan wants potential donors to know that the Peer Mentoring Program has made a big difference for him going from high school to living on his own as a college student.

“I feel like I’ve really been assisted, and I feel much more comfortable now as a freshman about my studies and my future.”

ACI Facts – Did you know?

- More than 23,000 alumni of ACI’s 26 member colleges and universities are employed by 145 top companies in Illinois
- ACI member colleges and universities provide an economic value of more than \$3.5 billion to the Illinois economy and employ more than 34,000 people
- ACI members graduate twice as many nurses and nearly twice as many teachers as other major Illinois colleges and universities combined
- 25 employers – including 11 Fortune 500 companies – participated at ACI’s 2019 Career Development Conference and Employer Expo
- Ten of the 22 charter member ACI colleges and universities have remained ACI members every year since the organization was founded 67 years ago.
- Throughout its history, ACI has awarded more than \$70 million in scholarships to Illinois college students

Member Colleges and Universities

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

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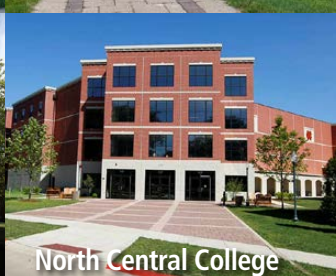
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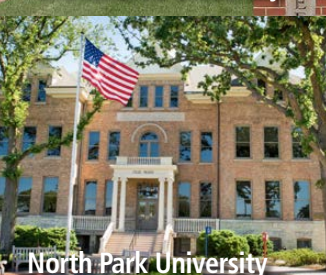
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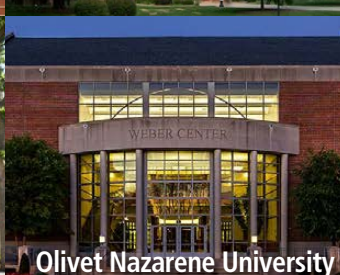
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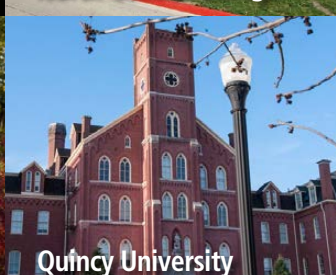
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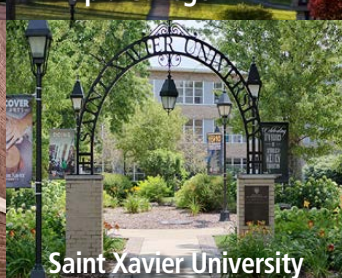
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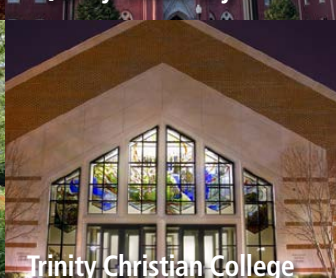
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Associated Colleges of Illinois supports member colleges and universities by advancing independent liberal arts and sciences education and helping underserved students succeed in college, career and life.

ACI Programs

Scholarship Program

ACI supports underserved students attending member colleges and universities. In 2018-2019, ACI awarded more than 325 scholarships funded by corporations, foundations and individuals.

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 college freshmen 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. In 2019, ACI's Peer Mentoring Program is operating on 11 member campuses, including Augustana College, Blackburn College, Concordia University Chicago, Dominican University, Eureka College, Millikin University, Monmouth College, North Central College, North Park University, Quincy University and Rockford University. The program serves a total of 156 students at the 11 campuses, including 130 mentees and 26 mentors.

Emergency Financial Aid Program

ACI meets the financial needs of students facing unanticipated hardships that can disrupt their academic studies. This aid enables students from low-to-moderate-income families the opportunity to continue their studies without interruption.

Professional Development Program

ACI provides professional development opportunities to member college and university staff through twice-yearly conferences serving four special interest groups: advancement, finance, public relations and marketing, and student engagement. Combined, more than 250 people attended ACI professional development conferences in November 2018 and June 2019.

Talent and Career Development Initiative

ACI's Talent and Career Development Initiative reflects a growing emphasis on supporting students preparing to transition to careers and matching employers with talent emerging from ACI member colleges and universities. This initiative, which addresses preparing students for future employment, building critical life skills, identifying and researching career opportunities, networking with employers, and securing rewarding positions, includes four integrated efforts:

• Career Development Conference and Employer Expo

ACI holds an annual Career Development Conference in fall to help match students and employers for permanent positions and internships. This event combines the features of a traditional career fair with a professional development conference to provide promising prospects from ACI's member colleges and universities with diverse opportunities to meet, observe, network and interview with future employers.

• Work and Life Skills Boot Camps

ACI's newest program will provide Saturday workshops in personal branding and career development, networking and successfully interviewing for jobs, technology skills for the workplace, and financial literacy. Focused on practical needs and targeting the growing population of low-income, first-generation and students of color, these workshops are designed to help match students to the right career and the right position, while effectively managing the transition from college to the world of work. ACI's Boot Camps will be delivered on a rotating basis at member campuses.

• Micro-Internships

Through a partnership with Parker Dewey, ACI deepens relationships between its member institutions, their students and the business world. Participating companies provide ACI students with micro-internships – opportunities to work on short-term, professional assignments. These micro-internships give companies the immediate support they need and help them build diverse talent pipelines, while providing ACI schools with actionable insights that advance career readiness among their graduates.

• Job and Internship Announcements

ACI provides students access to job and internship listings that employers may post at no-cost on ACI's website. These announcements are promoted to students at all 26 member colleges and universities.

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They said it

"The value of a college education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think."
Albert Einstein

"We need people who have the skills that a liberal arts education gives us. We can't execute our vision without the colleges and universities creating, nurturing the best from this current generation of students."

Adam Heckman
*Director of Technology and Civic Innovation
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"Broad-based liberal arts learning seems to me more practical than ever when we know that our graduates will not just change jobs but change careers multiple times in their lives. The marriage of rigorous liberal arts study with the possibility of professional training is the gold standard for future success."

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"A liberal education at an ACI-member institution contributes to intellectual and personal growth, career success in the global economy, higher lifetime earnings, greater tax revenues, reduced public service expenses, and stronger families and communities."

President Laurie M. Joyner
Saint Xavier University

"I know how transformative higher education is in the lives of our young people. Associated Colleges of Illinois, I know what a focus you put on helping first-generation students. I want to tell you on behalf of myself and on behalf of young people and first-generation students through this state – thank you. I want to ask you to keep doubling-down on that commitment."

Michael W. Frerichs
Illinois State Treasurer

So, what does business need from our educational system? One answer is that it needs more employees who excel in science and engineering and the remainder of a workforce that is exposed to enough science and mathematics to function in the rapidly evolving high-tech world. But that is only the beginning; one cannot live by equations alone. The need is increasing for workers with greater foreign language skills and an expanded knowledge of economics, history and geography. And who wants a technology-driven economy when those who drive it are not grounded in such fields as ethics?"

Norman Augustine
*Former Chairman and CEO
Lockheed Martin Corporation*

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