



Associated Colleges of Illinois

## Annual Report 2022-2023



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.

# Thank You!



Dear Friends of ACI,

As we look back on the leadership transition in fiscal year 2023, Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) spent its time evaluating how best ACI can support its members and their students in the immediate years ahead by assessing programs, surveying 24-member school presidents and provosts, benchmarking like state councils, and collecting member school and employment data.

The process of doing this exploration and rejuvenation around our work has brought a sense of renewal and energy that touches everything around us. It's very much like what your financial support does for the many students we help achieve a degree. They need the right encouragement, guidance and support to truly thrive, develop and realize their full capabilities.

Throughout the year, the support from ACI donors and partners is crucial for student development and to the importance of the liberal arts education they receive, which dramatically alters their future prospects. In the modern, rapidly developing world, the value of a liberal arts and sciences education cannot be overstated. It furnishes our students with key abilities beyond their chosen field of study. Skills in critical thinking, analyzing complex topics, and communicating effectively are indispensable. They help in molding individuals who are equipped to face life's hurdles, innovate, and lead with empathy.

Financial challenges should not impede a student's ambition. Thanks to the quality of our member schools and your critical financial support of scholarships and emergency funds, students can freely pursue their aspirations. Together, our partnerships and initiatives create a supportive network, offering guidance students need throughout their educational journey.

Each student success story reflects your impact. Your support does not just finance education; it is an investment in helping to shape students into future leaders and pioneers. Your continued and increased engagement is vital for this transformative process.

We are profoundly grateful for your ongoing support and for being a pivotal part of our mission to empower underrepresented students to become their best selves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lyn Bulman', written over a light-colored background.

Lyn Bulman  
Board Chair

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## “The Future We Lead”, ACI 2023 Benefit Luncheon

The 2023 ACI Benefit Luncheon, titled “The Future We Lead,” was held on April 21 at the University Club of Chicago.

ACI welcomed 115 guests and raised \$65,000 in net proceeds, including \$17,175 in extra-mile funds, on the day of the event. These funds will support ACI scholarships and programs.

Keynote speaker Dr. Susy Best, President and CEO, Thrive Group International and an alumna of two ACI member institutions, highlighted the critical role of financial and mentoring support in her and her peers’ college success. Testimonials from students Cameron Steele and Elide Lucina Rojo-Gutierrez echoed the impact of ACI’s financial aid on their academic and professional growth.

ACI leaders stressed the importance of adapting to evolving student needs and the need for support from the school community for future generations. The event underscored ACI’s commitment to enhancing student success through scholarships, mentorship, and emergency assistance, with broad community and corporate backing.

The ACI Benefit Luncheon sponsors included Environmental Design Inc., Fiducient Advisors, Gallagher, Hogan Marren Babbo & Rose, Ltd., Husch Blackwell, Jackson Lewis, Robbins Schwartz and TTX Co.

## Fall Conference In Person Again

The ACI Fall Professional Development Conference on November 11th at the Microsoft Technology Center in Chicago was ACI’s first in-person event since 2019, attracting 102 attendees. Participants came from 18 ACI member colleges, with Saint Xavier University and North Park University enjoying the most attendees.

The conference themed “Coming Together Again,” featured speakers from ACI member colleges, board members, corporate partners, and corporate sponsors to offer 20 unique breakout sessions on Advancement, Finance, Public Relations, Marketing, and Student Engagement.

Keynote speaker, Nathan Chappell, Senior Vice President at Donor Search, discussed the importance

of “radical connection” in philanthropy, based on his co-authored work, “The Generosity Crisis.” The conference highlighted the necessity of meaningful engagement to support philanthropic efforts.

The event was sponsored by DonorSearch, Quest Food Management Services, and The Virtual Care Group, highlighting the community’s commitment to professional development. The Microsoft Technology Center provided in-kind support.

Presentation slides were made available online to extend the conference’s reach, showcasing its role in promoting growth and collaboration in the ACI community post-pandemic.

## Work and Life Skills Boot Camp Focuses on Technology and Finance

ACI hosted its final semi-annual Work and Life Skills Boot Camp virtually on October 6th. The theme “Ready? Tech. Launch!” which focused on technology and finance, offering practical knowledge essential for professional success. The boot camp attracted 104 attendees including students and staff from eight ACI member schools. Registration data collected indicated that most students who attended this event identified as either low-income, minority or first generation. The majority of student attendees were active in ACI’s Peer Mentoring Program.

Citi sponsored an enhanced learning experience by providing complimentary lunches for group participants, fostering engagement and community learning. Participating schools facilitated viewing rooms, encouraging discussions and deeper understanding of the material. This initiative highlights ACI’s commitment to equipping students with vital skills for the modern workforce, drawing attention to community support and collaboration in personal and professional development.

“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. . . ”

## Honor Roll of Donors

Associated Colleges of Illinois gratefully recognizes the commitment of individuals, foundations, corporations and organizations who made contributions between June 1, 2022 and May 31, 2023. Thank you!

### \$100,000 and above

Anonymous  
McGraw Foundation  
Council of Independent Colleges

### \$50,000 to \$99,000

A. Montgomery Ward Foundation  
UPS Foundation

### \$20,000 to \$49,999

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CME Group Foundation  
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### \$10,000 to \$19,999

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### \$5,000 to \$9,999

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### \$2,500 to \$4,999

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### Professional Development Conference Sponsors

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### Annual Benefit Sponsors

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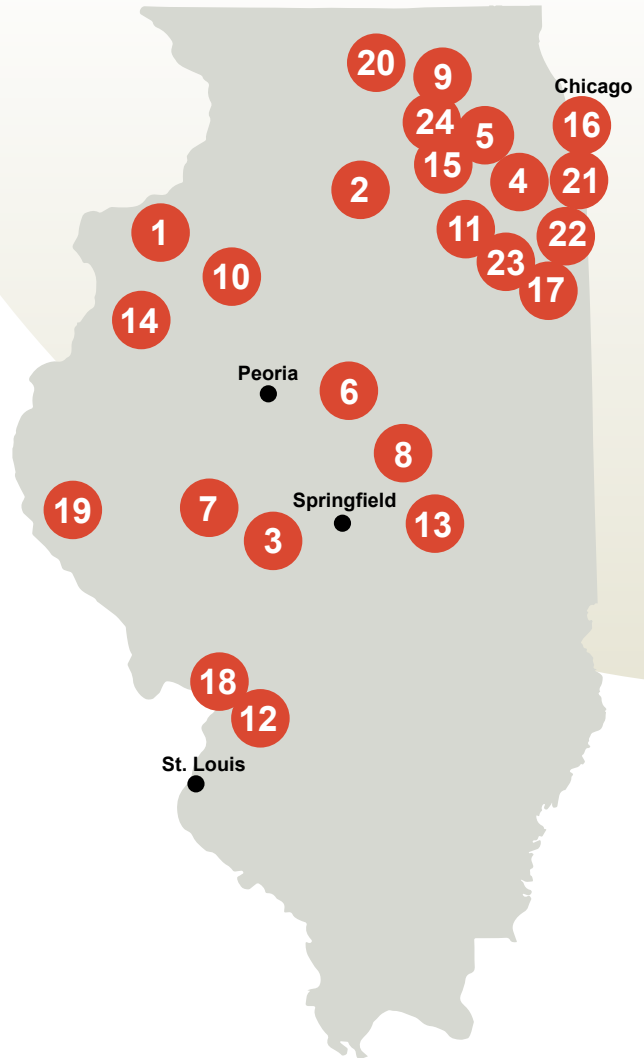


We make every effort to correctly list our donors. If we have made any errors or omissions, we sincerely apologize and ask that you contact Daisy Gomez at [dgomez@acifund.org](mailto:dgomez@acifund.org).

## Member Colleges and Universities

ACI is a collaboration of 24 independent, nonprofit, residential colleges and universities throughout Illinois.

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



“Without a doubt, we each attribute our past successes of graduating, and becoming successful citizens, our present success in life, and our confidence to manifest our desired future to be built upon the foundation of the financial aid, college acculturation and emotional, social, career and life support that we received while in college, and for some of us afforded by the Associated Colleges of Illinois.”

Dr. Susy Best, PsyD, MBA, an ACI alumnae and double ACI member school graduate.

## ACI Leadership

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### Administrative Team

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**Barbara Jolliff,** Staff Accountant and

Special Projects

**Tom Rubey,** Chief Financial Officer

**Leslie Scarpace,** Program Consultant

## ACI Programs

Associated Colleges of Illinois seeks to address critical challenges that private higher education can help solve through collaborations among its member colleges and universities, businesses, nonprofit partners, and public and private funders. Today, ACI programs address two priorities established by the U.S. Department of Education: 1) improving the outcomes of higher education by raising graduation rates among low-income, minority, and first-generation students; and 2) reducing college debt by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education and by providing financial aid that makes private higher education affordable to an increasingly diverse student population.

### 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.

### Work and Life Skills Boot Camps

Boot camps help equip students to meet employers' expectations and build rewarding lives and careers. These sessions assist students with job searches, networking, interviewing and workplace performance, and 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. Special thanks to Citi for providing current program funding.

### Career Leaders

This collaborative initiative 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 totaling \$36,200 were provided by numerous ACI donors to complete the required 2:1 match.

ACI established the Career Leader Scholarship during the 2022 Fall semester with twenty-one participating member schools. Each school was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship to an underserved senior student that recruited at least three classmates attend the ACI Fall Boot Camp or to enroll in ACI's Career Mentoring Program.

### Career Mentoring

Upper-classmen 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.

### Micro-Internships

These short-term, paid, professional assignments through ACI's partner, Parker Dewey, take place throughout the year and involve 5-40 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.

To help raise awareness of micro-internships among students attending ACI's member colleges and universities, FORVIS LLP sponsored the ACI | FORVIS Micro-Internship Scholarships in Spring 2023. Students from each participating school that applied for at least four Micro-Internships or secured one Micro-Internship were eligible for the scholarships. There were 18 recipients across 12 ACI member schools were selected by financial aid staff from various campuses.

ACI was awarded \$20,000 to initiate this effort through a First Opportunity Partners grant by the Council of Independent Colleges, Washington, D.C., with support from the UPS Foundation. ACI committed to raising an additional \$30,000 to fund the project.

These funds were provided by FORVIS LLP, a professional services firm, offering comprehensive assurance, tax, advisory and wealth management services. Individual donors also provided funding, including Donald J. Campbell Jr., Robert DiMeo and Arch W. Shaw Foundation.

## Scholarship Program

Part of ACI's mission is to support underserved students attending member colleges and universities. In the 2022-2023 academic year, ACI provided funds to member schools that helped 193 students with \$370,525 in scholarships, funded by companies, foundations and individuals. The average scholarship amount was \$1,839. Scholarship figures do not include emergency financial aid support.

Scholarships offered by ACI include:

- Montgomery Ward Foundation Scholarship
- ACI | FORVIS Micro-Internship Scholarship
- ACI General Scholarship
- Aileen S. Andrew Foundation Scholarship
- Career Leader Scholarship
- Carol Whitcomb Scholarship
- CIC/UPS Scholarship
- Deborah M. Sawyer and Leslie J. Sawyer STEM Student Scholarship
- Edward M. Hogan Memorial Scholarship
- Fiduciant Advisors Knowledge is Power Scholarship
- Gallagher Scholarship
- Husch Blackwell Scholarship
- Jackson Lewis P.C. Scholarship
- Next Generation Women in Finance WILD Gives Back Scholarship
- PACCAR Inc. Foundation Scholarship
- Robbins Schwartz Scholarship
- Sheehan Nagle Hartray Architects Scholarship
- TTX Company Scholarship

## 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 2022-2023 academic year, ACI provided \$101,280 in funding to member schools to support 52 students. The average funding given per student was \$1,948.

## Peer Mentoring Program

Increasing college graduation rates among low-income, first-generation college students and students of color is a top priority for Associated Colleges of Illinois. To achieve this goal, ACI's Peer Mentoring Program provides support to at-risk students facing challenges that might hinder them from completing their studies and/or graduating.

To counter those risks ACI matches these first-year students with trained peer mentors recruited from sophomores, juniors and seniors who faced similar challenges.

In the academic year 2022-23, the Peer Mentoring Program served 144 students, including 120 mentees and 24 mentors located in urban, suburban and rural communities across Illinois. By building a "relationship bridge" between mentees, mentors, the campus community and its support services, ACI's Peer Mentoring provides an early warning system that can anticipate and address the specific challenges these students face – before those challenges can derail a student's college career.

ACI's Peer Mentoring Program operates on 11 member campuses, including Augustana College, Blackburn College, 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. This generous funding provides scholarships, campus coordinator stipends and program activity support to each participating school.

## Professional Development Program

ACI provides professional development opportunities to member college and university staff through a semi-annual virtual and in-person conference that serve four special interest groups: advancement, finance, public relations and marketing, and student engagement. Member school staff can attend these conferences free of charge.





## Financial Information for June 1, 2022 to May 31, 2023

Financial information is presented for ACI's fiscal year ending May 31, 2023. Desmond & Ahern, Ltd., Certified Public Accountants, issued ACI an unmodified opinion on the financial statements.

As of May 31, total assets were \$985,907, while liabilities were \$223,154. Total Net Assets were \$755,213.

Gifts, awards and other services totaling \$660,108 were distributed to members during the year.

### Abbreviated Statement of Financial Position

#### Assets

Cash .....	\$179,971
Accounts Receivable .....	\$17,500
Investments .....	532,319
Property and equipment (net) .....	\$3,016
Other assets .....	<u>241,920</u>
Total assets .....	\$985,907

#### Liabilities

Scholarships and other distributions.....	\$151,090
Other liabilities.....	\$39,684
Net assets .....	<u>755,213</u>
Total liabilities and net assets.....	\$985,907

### Abbreviated Statement of Activities

#### Support and revenue

Contributions .....	\$620,011
Member assessments.....	\$527,490
Corporate partnerships.....	\$45,009
Investment income (net).....	\$14,650
Other income .....	<u>\$53,642</u>
Total support and revenue .....	\$1,247,317

#### Expenses

Gifts, awards and other services to members ..	660,108
Other programs ..	251,863
Management and general .....	158,038
Fundraising .....	<u>182,004</u>
Total expenses .....	<u>1,252,013</u>
Change in net assets .....	\$(4,696)

## Memorable Student Quotes

“ I liked the program. I like what it did for me, and I want to do the same thing that my mentor did for me. I like to help people, especially when I've got resources, and people to point them toward. That makes me feel good, just knowing I helped somebody.”

“ 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.”

“ 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.”

“ My career and the direction it is headed is something that may not have been possible without the help of ACI.”

“ 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.”

“ 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.”

# LEADING FORWARD



Dear ACI Supporters,

In pursuit of what lies ahead, we have organized a strategic working group comprised of corporate trustees and member presidents that expressed great interest in crafting Associated Colleges of Illinois' (ACI) future planning. These discussions will identify key items for board committees and staff to address going forward.

Through this group, we channel the collective expertise and insight of our community, ensuring that initiatives are both relevant and impactful. The journey forward will bolster partnerships and alliances that amplify ACI's mission. These partnerships will not merely serve as support mechanisms that are integral to our strategic vision but enable us to offer enriched experiences for the students we serve.

Recognizing the indispensable role of liberal arts education in the modern workforce, our efforts are and will be tailored to equip students with the tools they need to thrive in competitive environments. We will continue to look for opportunities to make investments in expanding our capacity and capabilities, virtual platforms, and thematic content delivery to yield higher levels of visibility and stakeholder connectivity.

The future we envision is to continue to evolve and adapt to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead to elevate the success of our member schools and the students they serve. No matter what we envision, the future we lead cannot be achieved without the collective support of our member schools and steadfast donors and investors who genuinely believe in the work.

Thank you for your belief and investment in ACI. Together, we will continue to make a difference one student at a time.

In gratitude,

**April Arnold**  
Executive Director

## Memorable Words from the Board

### WHY IS ACI'S MISSION IMPORTANT?

“ I think private schools in Illinois provide such excellent educational opportunities for prospective students all around the world. ACI supports these schools by providing students more opportunities to experience their education journey at these great institutions in our state.”

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“ I'm a higher education geek!”

---

“ I believe in the importance of supporting Illinois independent institutions of higher education in their efforts to ensure a successful college experience for first-generation, underrepresented minority, and financially disadvantaged students.”

---

“ Through my work providing legal support to higher education institutions, I am committed to promoting greater access to educational and professional opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds.”

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“ Education is one of three giving pillars that are important to me and my wife. Even better when efforts benefit underrepresented groups.”

“ Education and access to education are one of the best ways to bridge the wealth and career gap for first generation Americans and other marginalized groups.”

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“ I was not afforded the ability to go to college and felt that I could not afford to take on the debt it would have put me in. This greatly changed the course of career for myself. While I've ended up fortunate, I'm very aware that I beat the odds that many others may not and that life could have been very different.”

---

“ Education is the key to success, and everyone deserves the opportunity to have a good education.”

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“ As a first-generation student, I know firsthand about the benefits of having the opportunity to both enroll and stay in college, and how college can change a family's history.”



Associated Colleges of Illinois

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