

CENTER CONNECTIONS

An E-Letter from ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools

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News and Announcements

Center Annual Symposium explores proponents of progress

School reform, requirements for closing the achievement gap, research findings regarding excellent teaching, and recent initiatives at Chicago Public Schools drove the discussion at *Future Vision: Prerequisites for Progress in High-Need Schools*, the Annual Symposium of ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools. The symposium, on April 27, 2006, at the Union League Club of Chicago, featured stimulating and informative presentations from superb panelists, together with a lengthy question and answer period. The Symposium began with a keynote address from Daniel Fallon, chair, Education Division, Carnegie Corporation of New York, followed by panel presentations from Kati Haycock, director of the Education Trust, Arne Duncan, CEO, Chicago Public Schools; Penny Bender Sebring, president of the Lewis-Sebring Family Foundation and a director of the Chicago Public Education Fund.

Fallon focused his remarks on the dismal performance of America's high schools and the need for major reforms at the secondary level, both to maintain elementary school gains and to protect America's competitive position in the global political economy. He identified several successful high schools as case studies, emphasizing that such schools have a consistent college-bound curriculum, regular diagnostic testing, teacher learning communities to develop and share effective teaching practice, resource allocation practices focused on student learning needs, and emphases on coaching/mentoring and assessment.

Haycock provided compelling data on the United States' declining educational performance in critical subjects, especially after the elementary years. She also showed that minority elementary students are making significant gains in reading and math scores -- gains that are jeopardized by declining performance and high dropout rates in high schools. She mentioned five things that higher education can do to help remedy the situation:

1. Reinforce need for a rigorous curriculum for all students.
2. Collaborate with districts and states to develop high quality curricula.
3. Help to understand and disseminate good teaching practices and characteristics of teachers who produce strong student learning gains.
4. Produce more teachers with commitment and skills to teach knowledge and skills at a high level.
5. Focus on students of high poverty backgrounds and students of color.

Duncan and Bender Sebring focused on the positive steps being taken in Chicago, emphasizing developing good teaching, improving student performance, and the contributions philanthropy can make. Bender Sebring described the Urban Schools Initiative (supported by the Lewis-Sebring Family Foundation) and the five schools that have been established along lines of research-based practice. Both Duncan and Bender Sebring underscored the importance of encouraging teachers to gain national board certification and the impact that large numbers of board certified teachers can have in changing the educational climate. [Back to headlines](#)

ACI's Annual Meeting launches *College Success Network*

Improving college success rates for at-risk students was the focal point of the Associated Colleges of Illinois' (ACI) 54th Annual Meeting, *The Road to College Success*, on April 27, 2006, at the Union League Club of Chicago. ACI's Annual Meeting marked the dedication of ACI's *College Success Network*, a new initiative designed to help more minority, low-income and first generation students succeed on college campuses and enter the workforce with college degrees.

Developed in partnership with faculty, multicultural directors, financial aid departments, student services and admissions officers from ACI member institutions, ACI's *College Success Network* responds to data that say only 41 percent of minority students who enter college graduate, compared to 58 percent of their non-minority peers. Six years after entering college, only 26 percent of low-income students earn a degree, compared to 56 percent of their more affluent peers.

With funding from the Lumina Foundation for Education, the Foundation for Independent Higher Education, and Fifth Third Bancorp (the lead corporate sponsor for ACI's *College Success Network*), ACI member colleges and universities will pilot a powerful new combination of scholarships and support services, beginning with an assessment tool that will identify those incoming students at greatest risk. Ten ACI members will launch the *College Success Network* statewide: Aurora University; Greenville College; Knox College; Lewis University; McKendree College; Monmouth College; North Central College; North Park University; Trinity Christian College; and University of St. Francis. Students at these institutions will benefit from an array of custom-designed support services, combined with a powerful new scholarship program, launched with help from Fifth Third Bancorp, which has contributed \$35,000 for scholarships

targeted to Hispanic students. ACI expects this comprehensive approach will lead to higher college success and graduation rates among low-income, minority and first generation college students.

Winners of ACI's *Road to College Success Essay Contest* read portions of their essays. This year's contest, sponsored by the Dr Pepper/7 UP Bottling Company, challenged at-risk students at member colleges and universities to describe the obstacles they have faced as they pursue college success, and how their experience at an ACI institution has helped them meet those challenges and prepare for the future. Each winner received a \$1,500 merit award. This year's winners are Hortencia Acosta (Dominican University, '06) Amy Baio (Saint Xavier University '06.), Rasheed Jones (University of St. Francis '07), Leslie Lorton (Illinois College, '07) Lidia Serrano (Saint Xavier University '07), and Julio Trujillo (Knox College '06).

ACI inducted a new class of *ACI Alumni Shining Examples* – minority, low-income and first-generation college graduates of ACI member institutions who overcame significant barriers to achieve college success in the supportive environments of Illinois' private liberal arts-based institutions. This year's *ACI Alumni Shining Examples* told compelling stories about their motivations for finishing college and achieving success. The four honorees are: Marilyn Rhames (Dominican University '96), Daniel Sherrod (Illinois Wesleyan University '03), Jeremy Turner (Illinois College '95), and Pedro Valentin (Greenville College '96).

Finally, ACI recognized its new class of *Corporate and Community Shining Examples*. Chosen for their efforts to help at-risk students succeed in college, this year's honorees include Gregory Darnieder, Chicago Public Schools' director of Postsecondary Education; Daniel Fallon, chair, Education Division, Carnegie Corporation of New York; and Hermene Hartman, founder and president of the N'DIGO Foundation. [Back to headlines](#)

Call for Manuscripts, *Success in High-Need Schools*

Issue 2 of *Success in High-Need Schools*, focusing on Alternative and Accelerated Certification, will be posted in late May. Issue 3, *Recruitment and Retention of Teachers for High-Need Schools*, which will publish over the summer, currently is under review. Submissions are invited for future issues of the Center's online journal (www.successinhighneedschools.org). Unsolicited articles are encouraged on any topic related to recruitment, preparation, and retention of teachers in high-need schools. Note themes and deadlines for upcoming issues:

Innovation: Collaborative Projects that Make Change in High-Need Schools (Issue 4)
Articles due by August 15, 2006 (new deadline to accommodate summer writing projects)

Themes for fall and other future issues will be discussed at the May 19 Center partnership meeting.

Authors should consult guidelines at www.successinhighneedschools.org/journal/editorial. Unsolicited submissions and queries should be sent to journalforsuccess@acifund.org.

The premiere issue of *Success in High-Need Schools* remains posted at www.successinhighneedschools.org/journal, where subscribers can register to visit the site and to receive an email link whenever a new issue is published. [Back to headlines](#)

Next Center Partnership Meeting: May 19, 2006

11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
One North Franklin Street, Third Floor Conference Room
Chicago, IL

Presentation Topic: Technology in the Classroom
Julie Tonsing-Meyer, McKendree College

Please RSVP by May 15, 2006, if you plan to attend. Contact Akila Ruffin at 312-263-2391, ext. 37, or by email at akila.ruffin@acifund.org. All ACI *Center for Success* partners are encouraged to attend *Center* meetings to enable us to work together to improve teaching and learning in high-need schools. [Back to headlines](#)

Recruitment and Retention Programs

***Diversity at the Blackboard* Scholarship forms expire May 31, 2006**

The U.S. Department of Education has advised ACI that the scholarship forms now used by *Diversity at the Blackboard*-TQE-R partners to collect scholarship information (specifically, the contract form, contract addendum, and the teaching verification form) will expire on May 31, 2006. Consequently, partners should execute as many contracts as possible with your current or potential scholarship recipients using the current forms, before they expire (i.e., execute contracts with Summer 2006 and Fall 2006 scholarship recipients now, if possible). Additional guidance regarding an alternative to the current contract forms will be provided as soon as possible.

Please enter all scholarships granted and matching dollars awarded for your campus into the grants administration website by May 31, 2006. If you need additional scholarship dollars to award during the summer, please send your request to samarah.greeves@acifund.org. We will discuss these matters further at the May 19, 2006, partnership meeting DATB breakout session. [Back to headlines](#)

Teacher Ambassador Coordinator for ACI's *Diversity at the Blackboard* initiative selected

Felicia Shakespeare has been selected to serve as Teacher Ambassador Coordinator for ACI's *Diversity at the Blackboard* initiative. In this capacity, Shakespeare will help recruit more men and minorities to teaching careers by organizing and training fellow teachers to make presentations about *Diversity at the Blackboard* to local community groups. Shakespeare worked in corporate America before deciding to join *Transition to Teaching* in February 2003. She received her teacher certification as a member of the first Aurora University cohort. An ACI *Alumni Shining Examples* in 2005, Felicia Shakespeare teaches fourth-grade at Hermes Elementary School in Aurora. [Back to headlines](#)

ACI's Teacher Induction Academy Summer Retreat, June 22-23, 2006 Registration Deadline: May 22, 2006

All beginning teachers working in partner school districts are invited to attend ACI's *Teacher Induction Academy Summer Retreat, June 22-23, 2006, in Bloomington, IL.* Featured topics at this year's *Summer Retreat* include: Ruby Payne's *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*; The Importance of the Arts in High-Need Schools; Service Learning; Literacy; The Administrator-Teacher Relationship; Technology (High-Tech, Low-Cost & Podcasting); and a special presentation by the current Illinois Teacher of the Year, Jacqueline Bolger.

The retreat is open to teachers from across Illinois, with a special emphasis on those teaching in high-need schools. The event is FREE for all participating teachers (includes meals, resources, and overnight accommodations). Space is limited. The deadline for registering is May 22, 2006. For more information, contact: Lidia Han, lhhan@acifund.org or (312) 263-2391, ext. 38. [Back to headlines](#)

Principals' Forum, Summer Retreat, June 22-23, 2006

Registration Deadline: May 22, 2006

Principals are invited to join ACI's *Teacher Induction Academy Summer Retreat, June 22-23, 2006* for a special forum on attracting and retaining quality teachers to improve student achievement, creating a supportive environment for the beginning teachers in your school, opening the lines of communication with your staff, and developing a professional learning community with your teachers. The new Principals Forum was launched in February to focus on the issue of teacher retention in high-need schools. The two-day Summer Retreat, in Bloomington, offers the opportunity to continue the discussion that began then. Kristine Servais and Kellie Sanders will lead the forum with a discussion of their new book, *The Courage to Lead* (2006). The retreat and meals are free to principals in high-need schools. To register and find out about overnight accommodations, contact David Williams at 312-263-2391, ext. 44, or dwilliams@acifund.org. [Back to headlines](#)

Alternative and Accelerated Certification Programs

Transition to Teaching Recruitment Fairs

Two *Transition to Teaching Recruitment Fairs* sponsored by the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) attracted more than 300 prospective candidates. The first event was held Saturday, April 29, 2006, from 9:00 a.m. to noon, at Concordia University's Koehneke Community Center, in River Forest; the second fair was held on Wednesday, May 3, 2006, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the University Center, in downtown Chicago. ACI's *Transition to Teaching Recruitment Fairs* screen candidates for available teaching positions in math, science, special education, or bilingual education. Qualified candidates complete an accelerated, state-approved certification program through an "earn while you learn" model that could put them in the classroom as paid interns as soon as fall 2006. Representatives of ACI member schools Dominican University, North Park University, Rockford College, Saint Xavier University, and Trinity Christian College were on hand at the Recruitment Fairs to discuss *Transition to Teaching Partnerships* and other opportunities for adults interested in launching new careers in teaching. Information about paid internships, loan forgiveness, and other financial aid options also was available. [Back to headlines](#)

Center seeks new partners for Transition to Teaching Partnerships, Illinois Special Education Collaborative (I-SPED)

ACI members wishing to propose 2006 cohort programs in special education and other high-need areas, such as mathematics, science, and bilingual education, should contact David Williams (david.williams@acifund.org, or 312-263-2391, ext. 44). Colleges proposing special education cohorts can receive support through ACI's *I-SPED Collaborative*. Candidates in these special education cohorts may receive funding through ACI's *Transition to Teaching* grant. Cohorts in other high-need fields also may qualify for *Transition to Teaching* funding.

ACI's *Illinois Special Education Collaborative (I-SPED)* is designed to address Illinois' shortage of special education teachers by disseminating a model developed by Saint Xavier University. Funded by USDOE's Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education grant (FIPSE), *I-SPED* enables ACI to help members develop special education programs, to plan a professional development conference for later this year, and solicit input from ACI member special educators to communicate with the Illinois State Board of Education regarding policies that will advance special education in Illinois. [Back to headlines](#)

Innovation Projects

Innovation Project proposals due August 15, 2006

The next deadline for *Innovation Projects* is August 15, 2006. Project ideas are invited from all ACI member colleges and partner LEAs. Up to \$10,000 is available to support partners working together to develop innovative and replicable curricular models, pedagogies, and program practices that seek to improve teacher education and quality for high-need schools. To request a copy of the project materials, contact centerforsuccess@acifund.org. (Akila Ruffin, 312-263-2391, ext. 37) [Back to headlines](#)

Connecting Kids, Teachers, Technology, and Best Practices: Saint Xavier University/Rich Central High School Cyber Workshop Clinical Program

Saint Xavier University's "Cyber Workshop Clinical Project" has connected to the community in many and promising ways -- most notably, by bringing together Rich Central High School freshman and SXU English education teacher candidates. Through this project, students at a high-need Chicago-area high school are coming to class each day, firing up their laptops, conducting research, writing Web pages, and working together on individual and group projects for English and other classes in an online, networked environment. High school freshmen are publishing selected assignments to real audiences, including classmates, friends, family, college students, teachers, and the Web. These students collect and reflect on various materials -- not only their final products, but also their notes, drafts, peer edits -- all compiled in an electronic portfolio developed throughout the high school's first "paperless" term, while Saint Xavier University professors teach these students about Web page building, publishing, responsibility. Pre-service English teachers coach and guide the students along the way, teaching the kids about reading, writing, workshops, and technology, while learning themselves about the viability and issues of innovative teaching methods.

All of this is happening as a result of an ongoing school-university collaboration and a recent grant the partners received from the Associated Colleges of Illinois. One can only imagine the various types of behind-the-scenes collaboration that gave rise to the "Cyber Workshop Clinical Project" program. Several of the more concrete instances deserve mention:

- the invitation to the ACI "Partners in Education Conference" (where the grant opportunity originated) extended by Dean Beverly Gulley and Associate Dean Carol Tolson to SXU Arts and Sciences faculty;
- grant guidance from the ACI's *Center for Success in High Need Schools*;
- a long-term clinical collaboration between SXU and Rich Central High School;
- the faculty and administration of Rich Central High School, who led and facilitated the implementation of the project;
- the Rich Central Information Services Department, who efficiently set up and networked the laptop computer cart purchased by the grant;
- the SXU Information Services Department, who made multiple site visits and assisted the Rich Central team in the equipment set up;
- an educational partnership with Dell Computer that enabled the purchase of a complete class set of laptops and cart all within the grant budget;
- coordination of SXU Grants Office.

The Cyber Workshop Clinical Program is a small drop in the huge sea of possible educational reform. But it offers a powerful hope in showing how different institutions and different schooling levels can share best practices. It has brought about a connection, and now SXU students and pre-professional teachers have an extended opportunity to see and study the application of new, technology-enhanced methods in the secondary classroom. [Back to headlines](#)

Curriculum Transformation Initiatives

Curriculum Transformation Summer Projects

Lead campuses participating in the *Center's Curriculum Transformation Initiatives* are invited to submit summer 2006 action-research and campus project ideas by email no later than Friday, May 19, 2006. The *Center* invites projects of up to \$13,000 to support the work of up to eight faculty members, who will receive stipends of \$1,500 each to develop and strengthen collaboration of teacher education and arts and sciences faculty members, address issues of curriculum transformation to improve teacher preparation for teaching in high-need schools, and implement an action research component for presentation at the September 29, 2006, *Center Arts and Sciences Colloquium*. Institutions receiving funds will be notified of funding by Friday, June 2, 2006. To submit proposals or request additional information, contact Lidia Han, *Center* TQE program officer (lidia.han@acifund.org, 312-263-2391, ext. 38). [Back to headlines](#)

Upcoming Events

[View *Center* Events Calendar](#)