Your Pathway to Collaboration

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“By cultivating partnerships, attracting funding, building communities of practice, and creating a space to experiment and innovate, ACM multiplies the power of our vital member institutions as a force for good in the world.”

—Sonya Malunda, President
Who We Are

MISSION

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest enriches residential liberal arts education and strengthens members through collaboration.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Through our strategic initiatives and programs, we will:
• Encourage excellence in teaching and learning
• Promote equity and inclusion and celebrate individual and collective diversity
• Strengthen the connection between inquiry and practice
• Amplify the expertise of faculty, students, and staff
• Cultivate an open environment for innovation and exchange
• Leverage partnerships to enhance and enrich consortial programs

MEMBERS

For nearly 65 years, ACM has been the vehicle for collaboration among outstanding residential liberal arts colleges located in the Midwest. Today, ACM is an incubator and catalyst for programming that advances the academic and professional success of faculty, students, and staff at the 14 member colleges.

PARTNERS

ACM values our external partnerships and collaborations. Our work would not be possible without support from major national and regional foundations, collaborations with other consortia, and partnerships with other higher education, civic, and cultural organizations.
1950s

ACM grew out of occasional meetings of the presidents of the colleges belonging to the Midwest Collegiate Athletic Conference (today’s Midwest Conference). After a series of conversations about broader shared aspirations and related opportunities for collaboration, these colleges incorporated ACM in 1958 to address the following priorities:

- Advancing the member colleges’ shared interests and educational effectiveness
- Improving the efficiency of members’ operations, both administrative and cultural
- Assisting the members with developing additional sources of revenue

FOUNDRING MEMBERS OF ACM

Beloit College
Carleton College
Coe College
Cornell College
Grinnell College
Knox College
Lawrence University
Muhlenberg College
Ripon College
St. Olaf College

NEW MEMBER TO ACM

Lake Forest College

1960s

In 1963, ACM added a fourth priority: to coordinate the members’ activities in areas of mutual interest and responsibility, including developing and implementing collaborative educational programs between the member colleges and other institutions. Highlights from the 1960s include:

- Off-campus study or internship programs in partnership with Argonne National Laboratory, Chicago Public Schools, and Newberry Library
- Establishment of a Washington Office to assist members in obtaining federal grants and monitor federal policy
- Opening a Periodical Bank, providing a centralized location for sharing scholarly periodicals, and coordinating with research libraries in Chicago
- Creation of a Single Application Method, enabling students to apply to multiple ACM colleges with one application and fee
- Launch of consortial group meetings, data sharing strategies, and Tuition Remission Exchange Program

NEW MEMBERS TO ACM

Colorado College
Macalester College

1970s

In 1976, the board established a committee on priorities, which recommended expanding off-campus study offerings, conducting institutional research, sharing data, and collaborating on admissions. In 1977, they added priorities for programs to enrich faculty and staff development and support to strengthen the participation of women and minorities. Key activities in the 1970s included:

- Faculty development programs including research training for social scientists and an ACM-Northwestern Faculty Development Project
- Operational studies on admissions and library programs
- Cultural immersion programs in Costa Rica, Florence, Hong Kong, India, London
- A student internship program for women in management
- Launch of the Nick Adams Short Story Contest

NEW MEMBER TO ACM

Lake Forest College

1980s – 90s

ACM continued expanding its faculty development, off-campus study, and other student programs. Highlights from this period include:

- Off-campus study programs in Africa and Eastern Europe, including Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Yugoslavia (moved to Czech Republic due to Balkans war), and the Soviet Union/Russia
- Symposia for hosts titled “The Liberal Arts College: The Next Quarter Century”
- Programs for faculty focused on area studies, bilingual teaching, international education, and multicultural and global awareness, including the Ford Foundation Diversity Initiative to create curricula to meet the needs of increasingly diverse ACM campuses
- Launch of Minority Students in Academic Careers, which provided mentorship and research opportunities to encourage students to enter academia

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NEW MEMBER TO ACM

Lake Forest College

1990s

In 1990, ACM expanded its faculty development programs to include new areas such as multicultural education and support for diversity initiatives. Key activities in the 1990s included:

- Establishment of the Midwest Instructional Technology Center (MITC)
- Launch of the Mellon Foundation–funded Global Partners Project, which included faculty travel grants and seminars, funding to bring scholars from other countries to ACM and other consortia’s campuses, and support for students to study abroad
- The Faculty Career Enhancement Program (FaCE), to enable ACM faculty to engage in individual or collaborative projects that explore ways to strengthen liberal arts education
- Establishing the Midwest Instructional Technology Center (MITC)
- ACM-Mellon Post-doctoral Fellowship Program
- New models in off-campus study, including Chicago program tracks in urban studies, arts, and entrepreneurship and business; an exchange program in Brazil; and summer programs in Mexico City and Pune, India
- The beginning of ACM athletic tournaments

NEW MEMBER TO ACM

Lake Forest College

2000s

In 2002, ACM made faculty and staff development its top priority. In 2008, reflecting on its first 50 years, the consortium developed a new strategic plan that included expanding leadership development for administrators, strengthening off-campus study programs, and enhancing organizational effectiveness. Key activities in the 2000s included:

- The Mellon Foundation–funded Global Partners Project, which included faculty travel grants and seminars, funding to bring scholars from other countries to ACM and other consortia’s campuses, and support for students to study abroad
- The Faculty Career Enhancement Program (FaCE), to enable ACM faculty to engage in individual or collaborative projects that explore ways to strengthen liberal arts education
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NEW MEMBER TO ACM

Lake Forest College

2010s – 20s

In 2014, building on the previous strategic planning process, ACM added a focus on enhancing, assessing, and articulating the value of liberal arts education, building connections between on- and off-campus learning and life after college. In 2019, ACM articulated its latest strategic priorities:

- Place: Place-based interdisciplinary programs
- Pathways: Career and educational opportunities for faculty, students, and staff
- Professional Development: Excellence and diversity through leadership and skills training
- Platform: Communities that share information, resources, and insights

Highlights from this period include:

- Discontinuing international off-campus study programs and building new strategic partnerships
- Providing pathways for underrepresented undergraduates and PhD recipients to pursue academic careers through the Undergraduate and Faculty Fellows Program for a Diverse Professional
- Interdisciplinary learning and professional development through the continuation of FaCE and the introduction of Seminars in Advanced Interdisciplinary Learning and Institute on College Futures
- Launch of consortial anti-racism initiatives to address the institutional and structural forms of racism that have contributed to the differential experiences and outcomes for students, faculty, and staff

NEW MEMBER TO ACM

Lake Forest College

ACM faculty and staff gathered at Lake Forest College in 2022 to discuss high-impact practices in the liberal arts.
Develop and Cultivate Leaders

The quality of an institution's faculty, staff, and leadership is at the heart of its ability to deliver an excellent educational experience for students. To enable our colleges to operate effectively and find creative new ways to deliver on their missions, ACM is committed to providing opportunities for faculty and administrative professionals to be engaged, knowledgeable, and strategic in their careers while preparing students to lead.

Recent events make this more important than ever. The pandemic has brought profound change in the nature of the workplace. The ability to attract and retain faculty and staff talent and prepare students for the future of work will be essential for our colleges to flourish. The importance of this work is further emphasized by a growing interest among today's students in activism, social justice, and the leadership skills, cultural knowledge, and emotional intelligence necessary to pursue those ambitions. ACM programs will enhance the ability of our members to recruit outstanding faculty, staff, and students and will create communities of practice that provide essential support and resources to help these individuals develop, contribute, and thrive.

The leadership development programs prioritized by the Board of Directors include:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Leadership Fellows Program</td>
<td>• Strengthen and enhance diversity in academic leadership at liberal arts colleges through three-year experiential/professional development fellowships</td>
<td>July 2022–June 2025</td>
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<td>• Build and support a cohort of humanities faculty who promote equity-based leadership practices and help their campus build more inclusive institutional cultures</td>
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<td>ACM Student Leadership Summit</td>
<td>• Provide opportunities for emerging student leaders to develop their leadership, networking, and communication skills as well as cultural and emotional intelligence</td>
<td>Sept 2022 – June 2023</td>
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<td>• Build a pipeline of student leaders to participate in the ACM Student Leadership Colloquium (see below)</td>
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<td>ACM Student Leadership Colloquium</td>
<td>• Through a concrete set of projects on their campus or surrounding community, a cohort of student leaders will learn project management, principles of leadership, and other skills to make a positive impact in their community</td>
<td>Sept 2023 – June 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Professional Development</td>
<td>• Strengthen leadership skills among administrative leaders through robust series of professional development offerings on such topics as managing direct reports, conflict resolution, leading multi-generational teams, achieving work-life balance, and others.</td>
<td>January 2023–June 2024</td>
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<td>• Deepen ACM engagement with mid-career administrative staff through these professional development offerings.</td>
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Foster Inclusive and Equitable Environments

The data and research that document systemic inequities in our society have become more prominent during the past two years. Because education is the gateway to opportunity in American society, higher education institutions have an obligation to ensure that the pathways we create are equitably distributed. This commitment has become more urgent in the face of the unequal burdens of the pandemic, the unfair distribution of economic opportunity, and the persistent racism and violence causing trauma and harm in underrepresented communities.

The ACM's current portfolio of diversity and inclusive equity initiatives is part of a broad-based anti-racism initiative that prioritizes five strategies: Professional Development; Community and Cohort Building; Data Collection and Analysis; Governance; and Campus and Community Partnerships.

The diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives prioritized by the Board of Directors include:

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<td>Professional Development Series</td>
<td>• Support ACM colleges in their commitment and responsiveness to anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles through professional development workshops and other convenings.</td>
<td>July 2022–September 2023</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Build knowledge and implementation skills around inclusive and equitable practices for faculty and staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEI Partnerships</td>
<td>• Seek external partners to advance DEI programs and services offered to ACM faculty, staff, and students</td>
<td>September 2022–June 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate and Faculty Fellows Program for a Diverse Professoriate</td>
<td>• In collaboration with the Big Ten Academic Alliance: - Provide immersive program to enable up to 67 GRADx fellows to explore graduate study on Big Ten campuses - Build awareness among PhD candidates about academic careers at ACM colleges through Emerging Scholars Program - Support teaching, research, and tenure-track aspirations of new and ongoing Faculty Fellows (24 in total) through substantive workshops and cohort-building activities</td>
<td>July 2022–June 2023</td>
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<td>• Explore how BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) students’ experiences in local communities affect their sense of belonging, well-being, persistence toward graduation, and academic success</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Host campus and community leaders to create community of practice in support of BIPOC student well-being</td>
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<td>Equitable Civic Engagement Institute</td>
<td>• Design and secure funding for an initiative to advance diversity and inclusive equity in STEM education on ACM campuses</td>
<td>September 2022–Summer 2023</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Build and sustain a community of STEM faculty across ACM colleges to advance inclusive equity outcomes in STEM disciplines</td>
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<td>• Seek external partners to advance DEI programs and services offered to ACM colleges and students</td>
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STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS
Mental, physical, social, and emotional health will be key to faculty, staff, and students’ abilities to contribute their best ideas, develop a sense of belonging, and benefit fully from the educational and scholarly environment that ACM campuses provide. Mental health and well-being have been challenged by the social isolation, illness, and loss brought on by the pandemic; the disproportionate burdens that fell on caregivers; and the trauma of racism and hate that creates lasting harm for so many members of our communities. Ensuring the well-being of and sense of community among our students, faculty, and staff is an important aspect of the ACM’s work.

The community and well-being initiatives prioritized by the Board of Directors include:

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| New Programs to Support Mental Health and Well-being among Students, Faculty, and Staff | • Explore consortial agreement(s) on data gathering/sharing to support best practices and policies around student well-being  
• Explore possibility for consortial approach to telehealth services in support of students, faculty, and staff | September 2022–June 2023 |
| ACM Communities of Practice and Identity Groups | • Expand networking and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to foster connections and share skills across the consortium | July 2022–June 2024 |
| Consortial Groups | • Support ongoing cohort and community-building among 20+ existing consortial groups to strengthen connections and provide forum to address emerging issues  
• Provide more professional development opportunities, connections with other consortial groups, and focused discussions to strengthen consortial ties and address emerging issues  
• Create additional consortial groups that support and advance ACM’s strategic direction | July 2022–June 2024 |

Higher education and the residential liberal arts sector have undergone wrenching change in the past 20 years, with the pace of change accelerating during the past two years. Challenges to the residential liberal arts model include:

• deepening questions about the value of a liberal arts education,
• flight of students to urban centers and larger universities,
• growing engagement of employers in delivering skills-based educational programs,
• skepticism about the value of baccalaureate degrees and the emergence of new kinds of credentials, and
• new modes of educational delivery, with the pivot to online education during the pandemic rapidly accelerating this trend.

To navigate this rapidly changing environment, the ACM colleges need mechanisms for assessing the landscape, identifying and incubating promising ideas, and developing and evaluating innovative pilot efforts. ACM will foster a collaborative space that allows our members to explore and experiment with new models and pilot efforts that reaffirm the value of a residential liberal arts education for the 21st Century.

The new initiatives prioritized by the Board of Directors include:

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| ACM Online Course Sharing | • Pilot online course sharing initiative with interested ACM colleges and explore potential to expand course offerings for students, enhance retention, and provide financial benefits to participating institutions  
• Evaluate and assess student demand for shared courses and institutional return on investment from the program | September 2022–Summer 2023 |
| ICF 2.0 on the Role of Online Learning in Residential Liberal Arts Education | • Building on the success of previous Institutes on College Futures (ICF), convene colleagues to explore the impact of online learning at residential liberal arts campuses from multiple perspectives: equity, curriculum, accreditation, student success, financial, and academic | September 2022–June 2023 |
| Incubate Other Innovative Ideas | • Pre-Collegiate Program for High School Students – Explore the feasibility of a consortial pre-collegiate pipeline program for high school students  
• Student Employment Landscape – Examine the student employment landscape on campuses including trends, policies, support, and solutions  
• Collaborations with Higher Education Consortia – Explore extensions of current partnerships and new opportunities for outreach and cross-consortial collaboration  
• Summer Research Program – Explore opportunities to create collaborative summer research opportunities for students across ACM colleges | July 2023–June 2025 |
Refine and Enhance Existing Programs

ACM currently hosts several ongoing collaborations, including the Newberry Seminar, Field Museum Semester, Oak Ridge Science Semester, the Data Exchange, the Tuition Remission Exchange Program, the Nick Adams Short Story Contest, and others. During the next three years, ACM will coordinate with the member colleges to refine and enhance these programs and sunset those that are no longer advancing the member colleges’ collective aspirations.

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| ACM Off-Campus Study Programs | • Define ACM’s role in managing off-campus study programs  
• Identify strategies that will enhance student interest in and demand for affiliated and shared programs; explore expansion of these programs  
• Explore potential for short-term Chicago-based programming focused on civic engagement/social justice | July 2022–December 2023 |
| Institutionalizing Community-Based Pedagogies in the Liberal Arts Initiative | • Build awareness and expertise to enhance the stature of community-based pedagogies on and across ACM campuses  
• Create ACM community-of-practice to share strategies and best practices related to community-based pedagogies  
• Position ACM faculty and staff as national thought leaders on community-based pedagogies in the liberal arts | July 2022–June 2024 |
| Midwest College Showcase | • Increase awareness of and access to residential liberal arts colleges through enhanced virtual and in-person admissions activities for students, families, and high school counselors, in collaboration with Great Lakes Colleges Association | July 2022–June 2025 |
| Data Sharing and Dissemination Strategies | • Coordinate with ACM colleges to review and enhance data collection strategies to meet campus needs  
• Enhance data collection to better understand and proactively engage the evolving landscape of equity, inclusion, and social justice on ACM campuses | August 2022–July 2024 |