

Colorado

CONSTRUCTION & Design

WINTER 2012

The New Old Kid on the Block: Saint Joseph's Replacement Hospital

Renovations – Good Business During Hard Times

Inside AGC Colorado
Page 39

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Denver, CO
Permit No. 57

Passion + Education = Future Industry Workforce

Members of the design and build industries continue to be passionate about mentoring their future workforce in Colorado and one non-profit organization is determined to up its support of this effort, even in tough times.

The ACE Mentor Program of Metropolitan Denver, established in 2004, has a mission to use mentoring to engage, excite and enlighten high school students and encourage their pursuit of careers in the construction industry. The program also supports advancement in the industry by awarding scholarships reflecting diverse school populations.

Since its inception, 437 metro Denver high school students have participated in the program and more than \$324,000 in scholarships have been shared by 72 students. The after-school program has

proven to be a beneficial addition for learning opportunities and is attracting students to the profession that Colorado depends on for its quality of life and commerce.

“What makes ACE Denver unique is our ability to craft a program that is relatable and interesting,” said John Norris, ACE Denver program chairman. “It’s a pretty powerful experience for both students and mentors, and the excitement that grows from being exposed to so many areas of career potential helps students define their career path early on.”

Competition for the best and brightest college graduates is intense. ACE Denver taps a diverse group of mentors from the industry, each with a keen ability to motivate students they work with by sharing experiences, goals and visions of what their profession can contribute

to society. Mentors are willing to pool their human and financial resources to invest in a program that will attract graduates to feed the future industry workforce.

In the 2012 semester that started in mid-January, the ACE Denver program is linked with 11 high schools and meets at six locations around Denver.

Students enrolled in the ACE Denver program meet two hours per week for 15 weeks, and work hands-on with professionals in the design and build industries. They’re introduced to building industry professions by planning and designing mock projects on real sites. Students learn important skills such as problem-solving, drawing, writing and presentation, and become familiar with their mentor’s working environment.

Many of these students will be



In 2011, eight students representing East, Smoky Hill, Grandview and Alameda high schools and PS 1 Charter School received \$36,500 in ACE Denver scholarships. (Photo courtesy of ACE Mentor Program of Metropolitan Denver.)

the first generation in their families to attend college. Some will win scholarships averaging \$3,650, which they can apply to tuition and expenses at the junior college, college or university of their choice.

Students also have the chance to work with graduate students from the University of Colorado at Denver who earn credit hours toward their degrees by participating in the program as mentors. Mentored students explore careers ranging from architecture and landscape architecture to civil, structural, mechanical and electrical engineering. Following the program they are eligible to submit a scholarship application.

“As tuition continues to go up at Colorado institutions of higher education, students and their families are looking for ways to financially support their educational goals,” Norris said.

“Students who go through our program have a great advantage over many scholarship programs in that they receive annual financial support over a four-year period.”

“The fact that students must complete the program in order to apply for a scholarship ensures that our funds are being given to students who are truly interested in design and build industry careers.”

In January 2010 the national ACE Mentor Program conducted benchmark research to quantify ACE’s impact. ACE students who had completed the program between 2002 and 2009 were surveyed and research indicated that ACE is not only accomplishing its mission, but is helping advance additional objectives such as gaining valuable work and life skills.

The survey concluded:

- ACE Mentor Program participants graduate high school at a higher rate than their non-ACE counterparts.
- Female ACE participants enter college engineering programs at

twice the national rate of non-ACE counterparts.

- Almost 10 percent of college freshmen who intended to enroll in an architecture program in 2009 are ACE Mentor program alumni.
- Ninety percent of ACE Mentor Program students said the experience gave them an edge over their non-ACE counterparts.

ACE Denver relies on continuing relationships with sponsors and mentors who provide the valuable curriculum and content for the student experience. Mentors are dedicated industry participants who demonstrate a passion for the industry and volunteer up to 30 hours of their time during the school year. About 75 mentors support the ACE Denver program each year.

As with any non-profit organization, ACE Denver relies on a strong donor base to replenish and maintain its scholarship funding. Each year ACE Denver hosts its signature “Dollars for Scholars” fundraising event where students are awarded their scholarships. Mentors and donors attend the gala event where students meet those who are directly responsible for helping them.

Last year eight students were honored and \$36,500 in scholarships was awarded. Seventy five industry mentors and volunteers participated in the program.

“We’ve set a goal for 2012 to gain momentum to be able to engage even more students and increase our scholarship awards,” Norris said.

The 2012 “Dollars for Scholars” fundraiser banquet will be held in May on the Auraria campus.

2012 ACE Denver sponsors and mentors are currently being welcomed into the program. For more information on ACE Denver visit www.acementor.org/590 or contact Greg Williams, program director, at denverco@acementor.org or 303-748-0321. 📞

Anjali Kumar Found Her Major With the ACE Mentor Program

Anjali Kumar, a graduate of Alameda High School and an ACE Program Scholarship recipient, is now a sophomore at Colorado State University majoring in landscape architecture.

Anjali first learned of the ACE program from a cousin who was also a program participant. Anjali participated in the ACE program from 2006-2010 and worked with landscape architects on a Ronald McDonald Playhouse playground project.



Anjali Kumar is a first generation college student. Her brother, Amit, also participated in the ACE program. He now attends the University of Colorado Denver, majoring in mechanical engineering. (Photo courtesy of ACE Mentor Program of Metropolitan Denver.)

Anjali’s mentors included Liberty Lewis of SBS Inc., Ema Rankin of LEI Companies and Erica Toren of Martin/Martin, who is now an ACE board member.

“I found my major in this program,” Anjali said. “If someone is confused about what they should major in when they begin college, this is very helpful.”