

ACE MENTOR PROGRAM BRIDGES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GAP

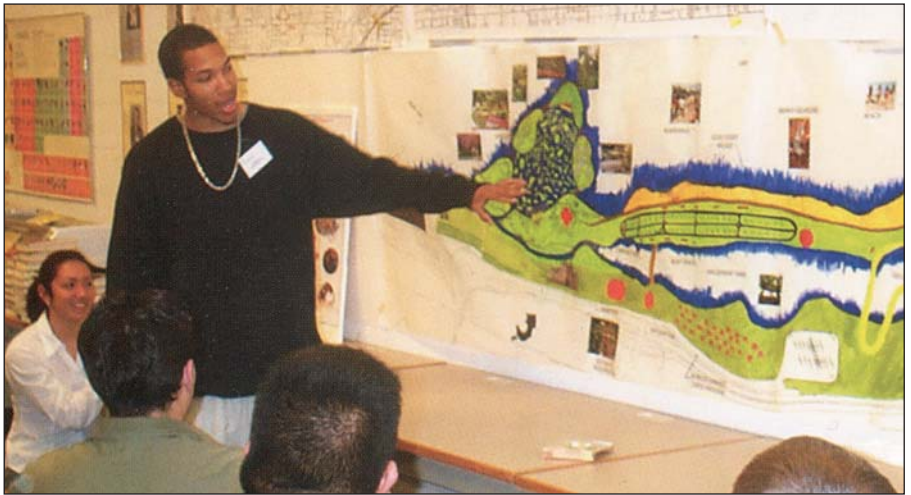
TURNER CONSTRUCTION GIVES ACE
A GIFT OF \$500,000 AS "A PROMISE DELIVERED"

This school year, more than 3,500 students are getting a firsthand look at the architecture, construction, and engineering industries in one of the nation's most popular mentor programs. Professionals from the three pillars, architecture, construction, and engineering—thus the name, ACE—provide hands-on experience to thousands of high school students. Since beginning as a non-profit corporation, the ACE Mentor Program, now in its eighth full year, can be found in most major cities across the United States.

"No one had any idea that this program would grow so quickly," says Charles H. Thornton, Ph.D., Chairman of the Thornton Tomasetti Group, a leading structural engineering firm, and founder of ACE. "We started with only one team of mentors and students in New York back in 1995. When the school year ended in June of 2003, there were programs in 28 cities. Currently there are programs in 57 cities. It is because of the commitment of hundreds of mentors that we have seen this phenomenal growth." Today, top officials from companies such as Turner Construction, The Gilbane Company, Bovis, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Parsons Brinckerhoff, Skanska, McGraw-Hill, and others are members of the national board. They lend their expertise to the board, and encourage their employees to become active mentors in the nationwide operation.

"A PROMISE DELIVERED"

ACE celebrated the new year by receiving a gift from Turner Construction Company, one of its leading firms. Understanding the program's need for financial support, senior officials of Turner Construction gave ACE more than \$500,000. The gift will go toward the operating budget in order to help further establish the program in major cities across the nation. "This program is successful and has proven it will help our industry bridge the workforce development gap," said Edward McNeill, senior vice president of operations for Turner Construction. "Our company has played an active role in ACE since the begin-



ning, and we feel industry leaders should support it financially."

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The ACE Mentor Program recruits from both public and private high schools, with special efforts made to reach women and minorities. Students selected for the program are divided into teams of 20 to 30. In these groups, they learn from owners, architects, construction managers, and engineers (civil and mechanical) in the construction community; each team also partners a student with a participating college or university.

During the school year, teams meet 15 times. Initially, students visit the mentor's firm; there, they participate in a facility tour and discuss the scope of their activities. They work through the design process in its entirety, from site acquisition to presenting the project; each task tackled for their "clients" is modeled on the real-life example set by the mentors. At the end of the school year, projects are presented at a culminating event. Scholarships are awarded to students to assist in their college education. "ACE had given over \$803,000 in scholarships," says Thornton. "We believe that our mentors have given well over \$2.3 million of their time to this program as well."

In addition to team meetings and similar activities, the ACE Mentor Program sponsors field trips to colleges and construction sites. There is also a "How to

Students work together in teams, simulate real world projects, and present them to their teachers and peers.

Go to College" night where involved colleges explain their admissions procedures and answer student questions; all ACE Mentor Program students and their parents are invited.

ACE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Many mentoring companies have provided internships and summer work for several students in the ACE programs. For example, Helen Fung, a Lehman High School graduate from the Bronx, N.Y., spent two years in the ACE Mentor Program, and won an ACE scholarship that she used for Carnegie Mellon University. There, during the summers, she interned with Bovis Land Lease, where now she is a full-time company employee. "The goal is to keep the kids interested in our firm," says McNeill. "We want them to consider full-time employment with us after graduating college."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Pamela Mullender, acting executive director of ACE Mentoring of America

Call: (202) 898-6396

E-Mail: pmullender@acementor.org