

# Architecture, construction firms partner to launch mentorship program for Milwaukee students

## ACE Mentor Program offered to students from three area high schools

by [Lauren Anderson](#) | February 19, 2018, 12:55 PM

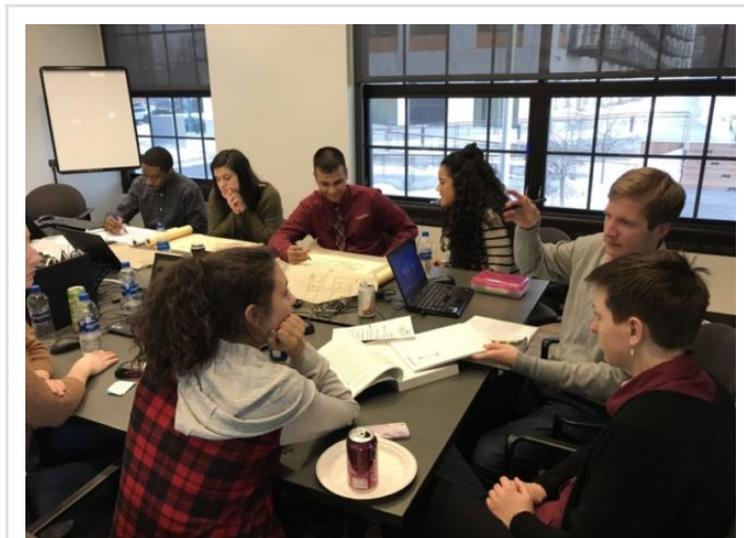
A group of business leaders in the architecture, construction and engineering industries have partnered to launch a Milwaukee chapter of the **ACE Mentor Program** (<http://www.acementor.org>), a national mentoring program that exposes high school students to those professions.

The new ACE Mentor Greater Milwaukee program gives students from three area high schools the opportunity to learn about careers in design and construction and complete hands-on projects.

The after-school program is available to students from Bay View High School, St. Anthony's High School and Carmen School of Science & Technology's southeastern campus, and is free to students.

The Milwaukee chapter's founding board members include: Adam Jelen of Gilbane Building Co., Carol Post of Thornton Tomasetti, Bill Ball of Grunau Co., Paula Verboomen of HGA Architects and Engineers, Kevin Engstrom of Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers, and David Meyers.

The program, which is open to high school students of all grades, includes a fall and spring session. The eight-week fall session is focused on the foundations of architecture, construction and engineering, and is followed by an eight-week spring session focused on real-life design and construction projects.



Students in the ACE Mentor Program Milwaukee chapter learn from industry representatives about architecture, construction and engineering.

Jelen, senior vice president of Gilbane Company and chairman of the ACE Mentor Greater Milwaukee board, said it's important to spark

students' interest early by exposing them to careers they might not otherwise see.

"This is a really, really big deal for Milwaukee," Jelen said. "We want to create a legacy for our industry and, whether it's higher ed or our firms in the industry, we want to make sure we have a pipeline. But if we don't start early, we can't build capacity."

The program's pilot in Milwaukee has included taking students on a tour of the new Milwaukee Bucks arena, using virtual reality to show them the potential issues clients could face and completing introductory architectural lessons and activities. Students meet at partnering firms' offices, including Gilbane, HGA and Grunau.

This semester, students are creating architectural designs and a logistics plan for a building on Marquette University's campus.

The national ACE Mentor Program, which was founded in 1994 by principals of leading design and construction firms, now has 70 affiliates in 37 states. It has awarded \$16 million in scholarships to date.

Jelen said the program's success in other cities gives him confidence in the Milwaukee chapter.

"It will greatly benefit Milwaukee, and for the test of time, not just in the short-term," Jelen said. "There is a sustainability and vitality and structure to the program that is second to none when it comes to architecture, construction and engineering."

Organizers plan to grow the coalition of industry representatives involved in the program and double the number of participating students next year.

