

# FES Makes a Difference with ACE Mentoring



An ACE team presents their proposed project to a RFQ selection committee.

By Jack Tipton, ACE Mentor Program of America

Winner of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring—the nation’s highest award for mentoring—ACE strives to provide a positive influence on high school students and encourage them to pursue careers in architecture, construction and engineering through mentoring. The prestigious award recognizes the critical role mentoring plays in the academic, personal and career development of students studying science and engineering—particularly those who belong to groups that are underrepresented in these fields. The ACE name stands for architecture, construction and engineering. ACE mentors enlighten students’ awareness of career opportunities in the industry and provide advice, role-model leadership, scholarships, and more.

Founded in New York in 1995, ACE began serving Florida students around 2006 and now has affiliates in Jacksonville, Orlando, Lakeland, Tampa, Sarasota, Ft. Myers, West Palm Beach, Ft. Lauderdale and Miami. Today the program serves nearly 300 students in Florida and 8,000 students nationally. Since its inception, ACE has provided a positive influence on over 50,000 students.

The multifaceted program includes college advice, field trips, and hands-on projects. The program also includes a student project and project presentations. With oversight from mentors, teams of students design a hypothetical project in response to a Request for Proposal and present the project to a “Selection Committee” of industry professionals at a year-

end event. At this year’s events, ACE awarded over \$38,000 in scholarships to deserving seniors choosing to pursue careers in the industry. To date, Florida ACE Affiliates have awarded \$156,000 in scholarships. Nationally, ACE has contributed over \$14,000,000 in scholarships.



ACE lead mentor and FES member Ken Loefgren, PE, works with an ACE team.

Recent national quantitative research proves that ACE works.

- Participants graduate high school at a higher rate than non-ACE participants.
- 40% of ACE alumni enter an engineering field.
- ACE increases diversity in university architecture, construction and engineering enrollment.

ACE student Destiny Childress wrote, “The many experiences I have had this past year from being a part of the ACE Mentoring Program have all been amazing. I grew both as a student and a person, learning about myself and the career field I plan on joining. The small but very competitive competitions we held in the beginning

gave us the teamwork, time-management, and communication skills that were necessary to complete the project. The project was so much fun. I enjoyed designing it with my team from the ground up. I learned everything that goes into a building, from the structure to the budget. Every mentor was so helpful and willing to give their time and effort to help us all grow. There are two main things that I will always be thankful for. While in this program I created friendships that will last forever, and I learned that I want to be a civil engineer, something that I was questioning before, but now I know that is what I love. I couldn't have had such an amazing time if it hadn't been for my team and mentors, and I can't wait to be a part of the program next year!"

Financial and mentoring support streams from local architecture, construction, and engineering firms, as well as professional societies and construction industry organizations. Many FES members contribute as



FES member Denise Ramsey, PE, presents a scholarship check to an ACE student.

mentors, and FES' Northeast Florida Chapter, for example, has contributed \$4,500 in scholarship donations.



ACE founder Dr. Charles Thornton accepts the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring.

Responding to the Presidential Award, Charles H. Thornton, PhD, PE, Chairman and Founder of ACE, said "All ACE mentors share in this moment, as they are the lifeblood of our organization," Dr. Thornton added, "It is because of their dedication, time, and effort, that we are able to reach and inspire wonderful young men and women."



ACE students gain an understanding of construction on a field trip.

Becoming a mentor is rewarding and easy. After background screening, you attend a few organizational meetings to plan student activities and learn about mentoring tools and practices provided by ACE. Then, simply share your enthusiasm for your profession with the students who look forward to meeting with you and truly value your input. Mentoring sessions are generally held once a week at a school or participated firm for two hours, beginning 10 minutes after the school day ends. To learn more about ACE Mentoring, including inspirational testimonials, or to get involved with this rewarding program, visit [www.acementor.org](http://www.acementor.org) or contact the author. The ACE Mentor Program is a 501(c)(3) organization. ■

#### About the Author:



Jack Tipton is the Director of the Southeast Regional Programs for ACE Mentor Program of America. He received his bachelor's in building construction technology from East

Tennessee State University. During his 38 year career, he worked on, but not limited to, hospitals, chemical plants and condominiums. He joined the national staff of the ACE Mentor Program as a consultant in 2010. Prior to joining the team, he served for seven years as a mentor, team leader, board member, national affiliate council member and president of the Nashville Affiliate. Jack's territory spans Arkansas to Southern Virginia, Kentucky to Miami, and most recently Puerto Rico.

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