

Luncheon fetches \$130,000 for mentorships

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De La Salle North Catholic High School student Elias Taylor, fourth from left, speaks about his experience as an engineering student in the ACE Mentor Program during a fundraising luncheon Thursday that raised over \$130,000 for the program. (Sam Tenney/DJC)

The ACE Mentor Program of Oregon raised more than \$130,000 during a luncheon at the Portland Art Museum on Thursday.

Members of more than 500 of the city's largest architecture, construction or

engineering firms attended the event, which also provided Portland Public Schools officials a chance to promote the district's bond measure set to go before voters next month.

“The biggest goal of the program is to identify young students in the Portland-metro area that are interested in pursuing a career in architecture, construction or engineering and support them to continue to enjoy that interest or discover they are interested in something else,” said Iris Boulware, vice chairwoman of the ACE Mentor Program of Oregon. “It’s a win-win either way.”

Currently, 114 mentors from 47 firms in the metro area help support the interests of 156 students from 42 schools. In 2016, the organization also funded 16 scholarships, ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000, for students pursuing college educations in a field tied to architecture, construction or engineering. The ACE Mentor Program of Oregon has handed out more than \$384,000 in college scholarships since 2007.

Sending mentors into area schools and providing after-school programs is one of the organization's main outreach efforts.

“Initially I wanted to be in architecture because I liked watching HGTV and watching everyone walk through the homes,” said Ross Miho, a senior at Jefferson High School. “Through ACE I discovered architecture is really up my alley.”

After spending two years in the program, Miho now plans to major in architecture at the University of Oregon. He has applied for one of the ACE Mentor Program's 2017 scholarships; recipients will be announced in May. He learned a lot through program participation, he said.

“Through some of my mentors I discovered that I would be inside of the

rooms dealing with people, but with contracting I would not only be involved with the building but with the people involved with the building,” he said. “Both of those sound really appealing; now I am just trying to figure out which program (path) I want to go down.”

Students can enter the program in their junior year, when it can have a big effect on direction.

“The ACE program really opened my eyes as to what architecture and construction engineering really is,” said Audrey Collins, a junior at Grant High School. “At first I was really interested in engineering on the civil side working with bridges and roads. After ACE, I have really decided I am more interested in construction management.”

The Portland-based chapter began in 2006 and is part of a national program that helps educate more than 8,000 students across the country. Locally, it has served nearly 1,000 students since its inception.

“We had a great fundraising effort this year with continued growth, but we want to make sure it is measured growth, so that we continue to support the students’ present (and) future,” Boulware said. “We also want to get the students through the program, but we also want to return those students into the local, working ACE population. We have a limited labor pool and the program helps generate the future of our industry.”