


Bold Leadership Real Reform

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI 2014



ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI



The **American Council of Trustees and Alumni** is an independent, non-profit organization committed to academic freedom, excellence, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Founded in 1995, ACTA is the only national organization dedicated to working with alumni, donors, trustees, and education leaders across the United States to support liberal arts education, uphold high academic standards, safeguard the free exchange of ideas on campus, and ensure that the next generation receives an intellectually rich, high-quality education at an affordable price. Our network consists of alumni and trustees from more than 1,100 colleges and universities, including over 17,000 current board members. Our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, reaches nearly 13,000 readers.

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“There is quite a profound sense in which the role of ACTA today is prophetic. It’s calling academic institutions back to their original founding principles and to their best selves. We need a prophetic voice out there in the front leading the resistance, and that voice is ACTA.”

Robert P. George
in ACTA’s 2014 video:
“Celebrating the Liberal Arts”

Mr. George is McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University



From the President

Higher education has never been more “front and center”—almost daily, we hear about spiraling costs, the lack of academic rigor, and the stifling political correctness on our college campuses. In 1995, long before such issues were hot, ACTA was already pointing out these worrisome trends and calling on policymakers and leaders in higher education to pursue reform—before it was too late.

Twenty years later, ACTA is now leading the charge—taking bold strides to make higher education reform a reality. And as the media draws more and more attention to this long-brewing crisis, our audience is growing—as never before.

Far too many institutions have failed to keep a focus on educational excellence. Far too many students have drifted through college with little sign of learning. Employers regularly complain that college graduates are not prepared for success in the workplace. Our civic literacy is seriously on the decline.

We simply must reverse these trends. And with your support, ACTA aims to do so.

First and foremost, we are reclaiming the authority of governing boards. Trustees are on the front lines, serving as important intermediaries between our institutions of learning and the greater public. They bear the responsibility for the health of our higher education system. And it is they who can steer our institutions to academic freedom, academic excellence, and accountability, so that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue a better future.

In the following pages, you will read about the many exciting initiatives we have to celebrate, thanks to your unflagging support.

- **Leadership in Governance.** *Governance for a New Era*, the blue-ribbon report signed by 22 of the most influential higher education leaders in the country, sets out a bold new strategy for higher education governance. The report and accompanying action plan and wallet card, distributed to our network of more than 17,000 trustees, are driving a lively discussion about governance and

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offering a blueprint for thoughtful and engaged stewardship for the next quarter century.

- **Accreditation Reform.** ACTA's high profile initiative to eliminate accreditation as we know it and to condition federal dollars on clear consumer information and proof of student learning is gaining traction as more and more policymakers and higher education leaders realize that the existing process has been a costly regulatory failure.
- **Solid Core Curricula.** ACTA's unique college rating, What Will They Learn?™, is changing incentives by identifying schools that prepare students for success after graduation. The ratings acknowledge schools with a coherent curriculum that will equip students with the skills and knowledge they need. Large public institutions—like Christopher Newport—are setting a model of academic excellence by using What Will They Learn?™ criteria as their guide.
- **Academic Freedom.** ACTA's vigorous campaign to restore academic freedom and intellectual diversity is seeing results. In newspapers, on radio, and on television, ACTA has become a recognized and powerful opponent of political correctness, the disinvitation of controversial speakers, and the need to return professional responsibility to the college classroom.

- **Go-To Resource.** More than ever before, our reader-friendly studies, dashboard reports, and reasoned demands for affordable and accountable higher education are receiving media attention as ACTA becomes the go-to resource for expertise on higher education reform.

With your help, ACTA is doing more than any other organization to set a roadmap for bold leadership and real reform.

In the following pages, you will see how we are making solid and steady progress on empowering informed trustees, improving undergraduate instruction, reducing the cost of tuition, and protecting the intellectual freedom that under-girds quality higher education.

Thank you for your commitment to better colleges and universities. Read on to see what your support makes possible.

With warm best wishes and sincere thanks,



Anne D. Neal
President

“ACTA is now leading the charge—taking bold strides to make higher education reform a reality. And as the media draws more and more attention to this long-brewing crisis, our audience is growing—as never before.”



Accountability

Launching a New Era of University Governance

Governance for a New Era—the title says it all. In 2014, ACTA set the governance agenda for the next quarter century, promoting this project on independent and informed college trusteeship. Our message: Those legally responsible for academic quality and cost-effectiveness—the governing boards—must do their jobs.

In the early summer, ACTA convened an invitation-only blue-ribbon panel in New York City headed by CUNY board chairman and former Yale University president Benno Schmidt. The purpose: to create a national report to serve as a blueprint for higher education trustees. The report's 22 signatories are a bipartisan “who’s who” of civic and education leaders, including former governors and top-elected officials as well as college presidents and trustees. In strong and eloquent language, the report makes recommendations concerning six essential tasks for trustees: articulating their school’s mission; protecting academic freedom and intellectual diversity; setting educational strategy; demanding affordability and transparency in performance and results; selecting presidents who will be effective board partners; and strengthening the selection and education of trustees.

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The report was sent to over 17,000 trustees across the country, all 50 governors and their education advisors, and the chairs of house and senate education committees in every state.

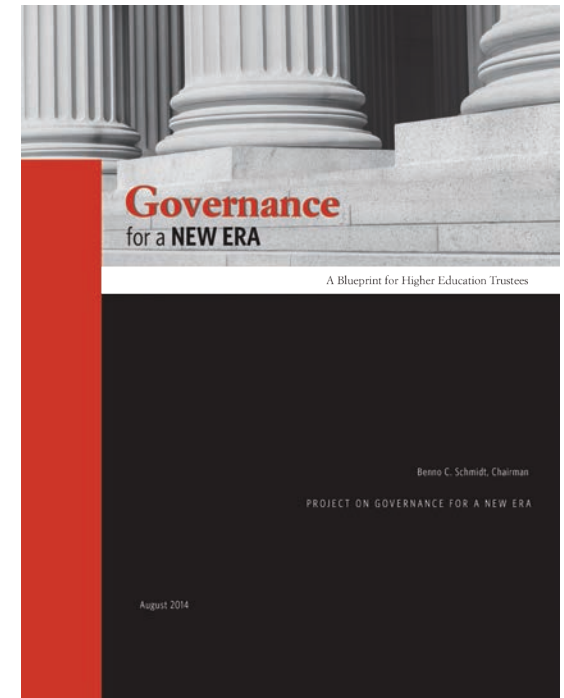
ACTA followed up on the report with a brochure-sized ***Governance for a New Era: An Action Plan for Trustees*** and a wallet card, ***Getting the Data: 10 Questions Trustees Should Ask***, to help trustees act on the report's recommendations and to provide easily portable guides for board and committee meeting discussions. Both pieces were sent to ACTA's entire trustee network.

Although the report was just recently released, it has already had a bold and measurable impact. The University System of Maryland, at the urging of signatory Tom McMillen, adopted a new policy, the first of its kind in the country, that tied the compensation of coaches and athletic directors to the student athletes' academic performance—in line with the report's recommendation. Mr. McMillen is currently partnering with ACTA to produce ACTA's first-ever webinar to educate trustees about this policy and other best practices for trustees in athletic oversight.

Meanwhile, at Purdue University, president Mitch Daniels took the report's recommendations to heart, announcing that he would implement nationally-normed testing on campus—to the loud disapproval of his faculty! At CUNY, board chairman Benno Schmidt announced the board would be adopting the accountability dashboard used by the Florida System and featured as a best practice in the report. And two signatories are teaming up to produce an educational MOOC for trustees on the history of education. ACTA has pledged to share this MOOC with all trustees and is reaching out to the National Governors Association and Republican Governors Association as potential educational outlets.

In Florida, signatory Dean Colson and his fellow trustees hosted a Trustee Summit in line with the report's call for continuing education. ACTA president Anne Neal was the keynote speaker, addressing "Charting a Path for the Future—Facing Challenges with Innovative Solutions" and outlining recommendations in the governance report.

At Penn State, a trustee pointed to the report as the exemplar of effective governance. And



“Trustees need to bring a renewed and vigorous commitment to learning about, and understanding, the academic enterprise. They must, going forward, require for themselves professional development, continuing education, and accountability. Just as trustees must insist on real and concrete institutional accountability, the public must demand the same of governing boards.”

Governance for a New Era's 22 signatories are a bipartisan “who’s who” of civic and education leaders, including former governors and top-elected officials, college presidents, and trustees.

Frank Brogan, chancellor, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and former lieutenant governor of Florida

Hank Brown, former president, University of Colorado and former U.S. senator

José Cabranes, former trustee, Yale University, Columbia University, and Colgate University

Jonathan Cole, former provost, Columbia University

Dean Colson, former chairman of the board and current trustee, State University System of Florida Board of Governors

Michael Crow, president, Arizona State University

Richard DeMillo, director, Georgia Tech Center for 21st Century Universities

John Engler, president, Business Roundtable and former governor of Michigan

Matthew Goldstein, chancellor emeritus, CUNY

Peter Hans, former board chair and current trustee, University of North Carolina Board of Governors

John Hillen, trustee, Hampden-Sydney College

KC Johnson, professor of history, Brooklyn College

Donald Kagan, former Dean of the College, Yale University

Phyllis Kruttsch, former regent, University of Wisconsin System

Clara Lovett, former president, Northern Arizona University

Thomas McMillen, regent, University of Maryland System and former U.S. congressman

Carl Menges, former trustee, Hamilton College

Velma Montoya, former regent, University of California

Ben Novak, former trustee, Penn State University

Arthur Rothkopf, former president, Lafayette College

Benno Schmidt, chairman, CUNY Board of Trustees

Stephen Smith, former trustee, Dartmouth College

in California, the board of regents included a discussion of the report in its public meeting on the meaning of a UC degree.

As *Inside Higher Ed* observed, referring to the report, “Many higher education leaders have rejected similar calls in the past. But it’s also the case that information distributed by the council has in the past been influential with many trustees.” Indeed.

The report’s immediate traction is no doubt due in part to the excellent coverage it received in the national media. The report was widely read, with media hits from publications ranging from the *Huffington Post*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *The Oklahoman* to *Forbes*—which called *Governance for a New Era* a “common-sense document” and ACTA “intrepid.” Benno Schmidt launched the report with a hard-charging interview on the state of higher education and the report’s proposed solutions on Bloomberg TV.

Since its publication in August, the report has been viewed over 1,400 times on our website GoACTA.org.

What does the public think?

As it turns out, the report comes none too soon—at least as far as the public is concerned. On launch day, the report was accompanied by a

survey conducted by GfK that strongly supported the urgent need for trustee engagement. Notable findings included a resounding affirmation of ACTA’s campaign for core curricula; profound concern about disinvitation of controversial speakers; and nearly unanimous agreement that the cost of college is now out of reach and that boards must take the lead.

The need for cost-control has consistently been at the forefront of ACTA’s work, and in May, Anne Neal and Michael Poliakoff took leading roles in the video, “The Costs of College,” which put the faces and stories of indebted college students before the public.

Supporting Effective Trusteeship

Showdown in the Lone Star State

We all know that things are just bigger in Texas. And never did that prove more true than the showdown in 2014 on governance at the University of Texas. Yes, indeed, engaged trusteeship can be a combat sport.

Vigilant trustees who question the status quo are often marginalized and pilloried. And that has surely been the case in the Lone Star State where one diligent trustee—Wallace Hall, by name—has

found himself the subject of an impeachment investigation and possible indictment.

The saga started several years ago when the board sought substantial data on efficiencies and productivity—to the dismay of many administrators and faculty.

Meanwhile, regent Hall suspected wrongdoing in UT's admissions process and made open records requests to investigate. He was soon lambasted by the administration, faced impeachment, and eventually censured by a Texas House committee. In the face of public criticism, he remained devoted to protecting taxpayer dollars and working on behalf of the people of Texas.

At the time, ACTA was virtually a lone voice defending Hall for demanding an open and transparent process. ACTA also supported the right of trustees to make a leadership change, arguing that presidents report to trustees, not vice versa. In early 2015, an independent report was released that revealed that UT President Bill Powers had



ACTA was nearly a lone voice defending UT regent Wallace Hall for demanding an open and transparent process when he suspected wrongdoing in UT's admissions.

“Governance for a New Era’...is available online, and deserves a wide readership, since most Americans have some stake in higher ed—as taxpayers, even if not as parents or students or employers.”

Forbes, August 27, 2014

The logo for Forbes magazine, featuring the word "Forbes" in a bold, blue, serif font with a registered trademark symbol.

By: MICHAEL DeBOW | August 27, 2014

College and University Trustees: Real Reform or Business as Usual?



ACTA hosted a press conference on the governance report at the National Press Club with signatories Tom McMillen, John Engler, Benno Schmidt, and Richard DeMillo. We live-tweeted the event to great success: the story was re-tweeted 32 times and made nearly 12,000 impressions in one day.



By: ELIZABETH MACDONALD | August 25, 2014

Colleges Worsen Income Inequality

Tuition gouging for degrees that are useless in the real world and a failed business model have put U.S. colleges front and center as exacerbating income inequality.

Many college students are increasingly getting priced out of getting the very same skills elected officials in Washington, D.C. have strenuously argued are needed to stop rising pay gaps.

Annual private college costs have surged 24% over the last ten years, to \$40,917 on average, and are up 37% for public universities, to \$18,391, data from the College Board show. At the same time, median U.S. household income has steadily dropped 5.7% from 2003 to 2013.

Meanwhile, student unemployment worsened over the last decade: The 20-to-24 age bracket saw jobless rates rising to 11.1% from 9.5% in 2003, and for 25 and older, it grew a percentage point to 5.6%.

Over the decades, college officials have used their nonprofit status to build an unsustainable business model more akin to hoteliers, one that real estate mogul Donald Trump would envy. And all on the backs of taxpayers, students and their families.

Schools across the U.S. offer practical degrees, useful in the corporate or public sector, like engineering, software design, or accounting. But even the most prestigious colleges no longer offer a solid liberal arts education. Instead, many schools charge nosebleed tuition for degrees built on useless courses about, say, the cultural efficacy of soap operas, or sex and gender in society, that don't lead to work in the real world and exacerbate income inequality.

The broken college business model has dire consequences, as students face a brutally-competitive job market in the wake of the worst financial collapse since the Great Depression. Solid, practical degrees are more important than ever, as "young adults change jobs on average 11 times in the first 25 years of their adult lives," notes George Leef, director of research for the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

A top college watchdog, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), adds: "It is a tragedy that our colleges and universities are increasingly characterized by their high costs, not their high standards," adding, "it is time to demand improvement."

Meanwhile, income inequality is rampant for those without college degrees. Employees with just a high-school diploma earn

just two-thirds of the typical salary of college graduates, down from 83% in 1965, the earliest year for available data, says the Pew Research Center. Young adults with high-school diplomas face three times the likelihood of living in poverty than they did 35 years ago, Pew says.

Another disturbing headline: The era of the four-year college education is over. ACTA says: "Six years is the norm used by the U.S. Department of Education" with "far too many" students taking even longer to graduate, burdening families even more.

Ask yourself: Where is it written in the tax code that a college's nonprofit status means it should prioritize spending on bling over reducing tuition?

Why are taxpayers, students and their families subsidizing commercial activity at colleges, when these schools get so much federal and state aid on top of tax breaks?

Where are the Congressional hearings into tax breaks meant for colleges operating solely for educational purposes – a mission that is supposed to help solve income inequality?

DC Ignores Incentives Problem

The student debt bubble has blown to \$1.2 trillion, as Democratic Senators Elizabeth Warren, Al Franken, and Richard Durbin push for new legislation to help student borrowers, including more tax increases on upper brackets to help pay for student debt.

President Barack Obama has already issued an executive order to extend caps on student borrowers' repayments at 10% of their monthly income. Seven in 10 college seniors graduating last year had student loan debt. Those graduates owed an average of \$29,400 each, according to the Project on Student Debt.

But this is a story about incentives, not after-the-fact fixes. College officials are hiking tuition costs even though they operate their schools as nonprofits, and even though students get substantial federal and state aid.

Colleges and universities get a lot of tax breaks. They are exempt from paying federal corporate income taxes, state and local sales taxes, and property taxes. Their endowments accept tax-deductible contributions and they don't have to pay capital gains taxes on those funds. Also, colleges can borrow money using tax-exempt bonds and they do not have to pay taxes on the interest they earn.

ACTA ON COST

In August, *Fox Business* cited ACTA's research on the high costs and low academic standards at America's colleges and universities.

In September, a documentary on the rising cost of higher education and its effect on indebted graduates featured ACTA president Anne D. Neal and vice president of policy Michael Poliakoff.

indeed used his office to pressure the admissions office into accepting underqualified students.

Truth emerged and the tide turned, with the *Wall Street Journal*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and the *Dallas Morning News* at last concluding that perhaps Mr. Hall had it right after all when an outside investigator concluded that UT's president had virtually put admissions up for sale.

We appeared in many Texas and national media outlets on this controversy, including an op-ed in the *Houston Chronicle*, as well as mentions in the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Austin American Statesman*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Associated Press*, *Bloomberg.com*, and a letter to the editor in the *New York Times*.

Go-to Resource for Trustees

In 2014, ACTA introduced several trustee guides and counseled boards on issues ranging from strategic planning to academic freedom. We responded to over 110 requests for information on general education and to more than 130 trustees who contacted ACTA for additional resources on effective governance. It is increasingly clear: ACTA is the go-to



THE COSTS OF COLLEGE

Michael Poliakoff, Vice President of Policy American Council of Trustees and Alumni

resource for active, engaged trustees who want to make a difference.

Customized training is a centerpiece of ACTA's support for trustees and in 2014 we continued our partnership with The Aspen Institute to host trustee seminars emphasizing quality, cost, accountability, and effective governance. At meetings in Richmond and Boston, we welcomed trustees from a wide range of institutions including Hampden-Sydney College, Virginia Tech, the University of Nebraska, James Madison University, and the University of Toledo. This year our topics included: "Measuring Academic Outcomes: How Trustees Support Student Learning" featuring Council for Aid to Education president Roger Benjamin and "Planning and Leadership: How Trustees and Presidents Work Together" featuring former University of Colorado president Hank Brown.

One-hundred percent of the attendees surveyed rated the programs "very good" or "excellent" in quality of participants, quality of conversation, and overall experience. ACTA's unique seminars pair classic writers such as Plato, Tacitus, and Jefferson with contemporary studies of the challenges facing higher education. Trustees returned to their institutions with tools for success and an expanded network of reform-minded colleagues.

Changing the Conversation

With increasing frequency, ACTA's recommendations are finding their way onto board and legislative agendas. The Virginia legislature adopted a bill advanced by ACTA that emphasized the public trustee's primary obligation to the taxpayers and the state rather than the institution.

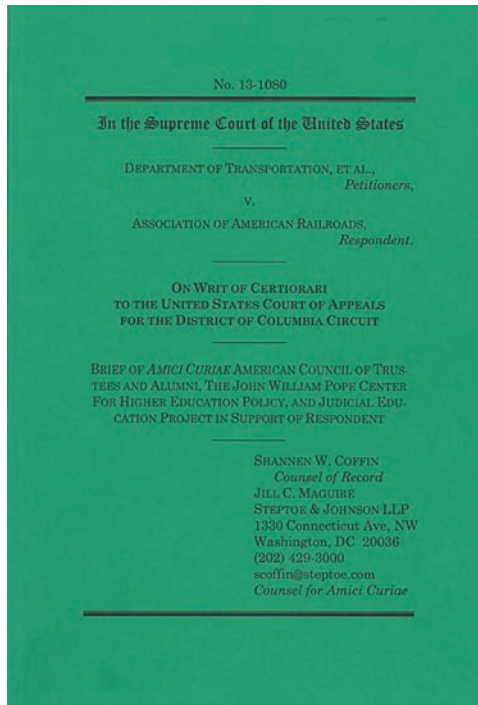
In Pennsylvania, a state senator cited ACTA's research in proposing legislation to reduce the size of the Penn State Board, gaining bipartisan support with 230 co-sponsors. Although tabled in late June, the bill empowered a group of alumni-elected trustees on the Penn State board to move for structural reforms themselves. Vice president of policy Michael Poliakoff's recommendations to Penn State's new president were quoted by the *Associated Press*, the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

ACTA has twice spoken at trustees conferences organized by Indiana Higher Education Commissioner Teresa Lubbers, and we were gratified to see the commission's bold new plan in 2014 to increase completion rates at the state's public universities.

ACTA is truly informing the discussion, giving trustees and policymakers the data and policy guidance they need to do their work effectively.



Hank Brown, former U.S. senator, past president of the University of Colorado, and signatory of *Governance for a New Era*, keynoted the trustee seminar co-sponsored by ACTA and The Aspen Institute in Cambridge. He offered concrete solutions to improve student learning, lower the costs of college, and take American higher education into the 21st century.



ACTA filed an amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the accreditator monopoly.

Fighting Accreditator Interference

ACTA used to be the only one talking about accreditation reform. But no more. Accreditation has now become a household word and the report “Protecting Students and Taxpayers” by Hank Brown, the head of ACTA’s accreditation reform initiative, continues to drive the policy and media debate.

Our position has never been stronger, with both Brown and ACTA’s scholar-in-residence, Dr. Clara Lovett, working on the accreditation reform project. In 2014, ACTA pushed hard on accreditation reform as Congress geared up to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA). Accreditation has been a costly regulatory failure, and we’re working to open up the higher education marketplace to new providers, to relieve colleges of unnecessary cost and intrusion, and to provide parents and students with transparent consumer information rather than the cozy and closed process that exists today.

In the course of the year, we held stakeholder meetings that brought together members of Congress and policy staff, as well as former college presidents, trustees, and think tank allies to educate one other and develop proposals for accreditation reform. And we saw our ideas start to take hold.

In the late summer, Paul Ryan and the House Budget Committee issued a Discussion Draft calling for accreditation reform and citing ACTA’s research. And the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), on which ACTA president Anne Neal sits, adopted preliminary policy recommendations that include ACTA’s call to focus on student learning gains and transparent reporting of key performance metrics.

In 2014, we also raised the stakes in the reform battle by going to the courts—with a constitutional challenge to the accreditator monopoly. Prompted by accreditors’ growing intrusion in matters of state law and policy, ACTA filed an amicus brief in July that calls into question accreditator authority and explains why the delegation of federal power to self-interested private entities is a violation of the U.S. Constitution.

ACTA filed first in the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals and then followed shortly thereafter with an amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court that similarly highlighted unconstitutional delegation issues. We linked the cases to the recent interference by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in the governance of the University of Virginia. In particular, we noted that the U.S. Department of Education

had concluded that it had no review authority over accreditor standards that fell outside the specific HEA provisions.

ACTA argued in its brief: “The substantive decisions affecting rights under federal law are farmed out to private actors, leaving affected citizens no recourse to the political process.” Timed to coincide with Congress’ preparation for HEA reauthorization, news of the amicus brief was sent to national media and the Education Committees of both the House and Senate.

This amicus brief is a natural follow-on to ACTA’s complaint filed in December 2012 with the Department of Education against the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities (SACS)

for overreach in placing the University of Virginia on warning. And you won’t be surprised that the accreditors are feeling threatened!

The entrenched guardians of the status quo were so afraid, that when SACS was up for its review before NACIQI, the accreditor went secretly to the Department of Education to demand the recusal of ACTA’s president. Without notice or input from ACTA, the Department of Education ruled that ACTA president Anne Neal must recuse herself from deliberation—with threat of criminal consequences. ACTA spoke out against this repressive move—and we won! At the end of the year, the U.S. Department of Education admitted its error and apologized to Ms. Neal.

“It is great to know that we have a strong education leader like you who not only joins the discussion but also works toward finding solutions. We are fortunate to work with you to create a stronger country for future generations.”

The Honorable Chris Christie, Chairman, Republican Governors Association

In February, ACTA president Anne Neal spoke before the Republican Governors Association’s Executive Roundtable Meeting as part of a panel on higher education.



Academic Excellence

Holding Institutions Accountable

The evidence is in: too many colleges charge a fortune, but for countless students provide little value.

In 2014, ACTA released two major reports, with titles that tell the story. The first was ***Education or Reputation?: A Look at America's Top-Ranked Liberal Arts Colleges***. The Second: ***Getting What You Pay For?: A Look at America's Top-Ranked Public Universities***.

The reports put the runaway cost of college in perspective: "If the price of household items increased at the same rate as higher education over the last few decades, milk would cost \$17.48 a gallon." Both reports offered specific, actionable recommendations to trustees and public leaders to improve curricula, rein in costs, and improve accountability. And more than 11,000 trustees—at private and public institutions—received copies.

Education or Reputation?

Our colleges promise—almost invariably—to give students a rich liberal arts education. But very few keep that promise. *Education or Reputation?* examined the top 29 private institutions in America. We focused on these elite liberal

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arts institutions because they are widely held to represent the highest standards of collegiate education. Overall, however, we found that they have abandoned the rigorous and disciplined curriculum that prepares a graduate for the challenges of a dynamic and changing world economy and for meaningful service to their community. Very few demonstrated academic rigor and few were diligent about controlling rising costs.

We found that:

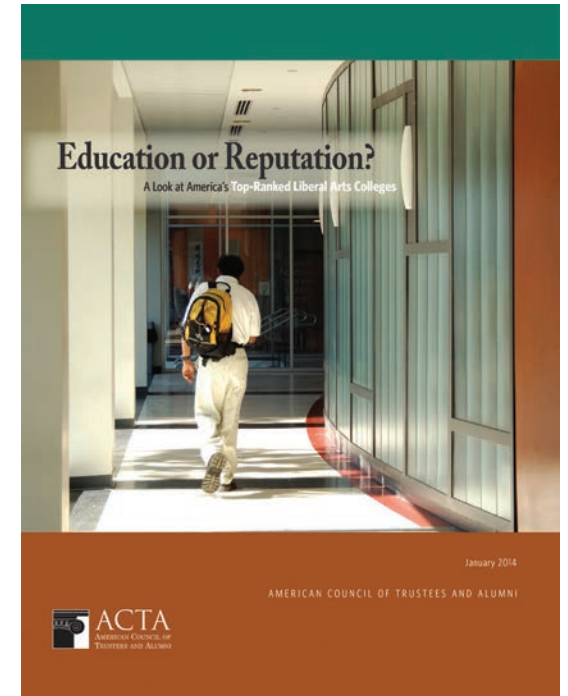
- Elite colleges raised tuition and fees over the last few years anywhere from 6.2% to 17.1%, adjusted for inflation, despite average endowments of almost \$1 billion.
- 11 of these institutions paid their presidents base salaries of \$400,000 or more to run colleges that typically have fewer than 2,000 students. These presidents are paid as well as—or better than—the President of the United States.
- Not a single institution (except for the military academies) requires a foundational, college-

level course in American history or government. Only two require an economics course; only five require a literature course.

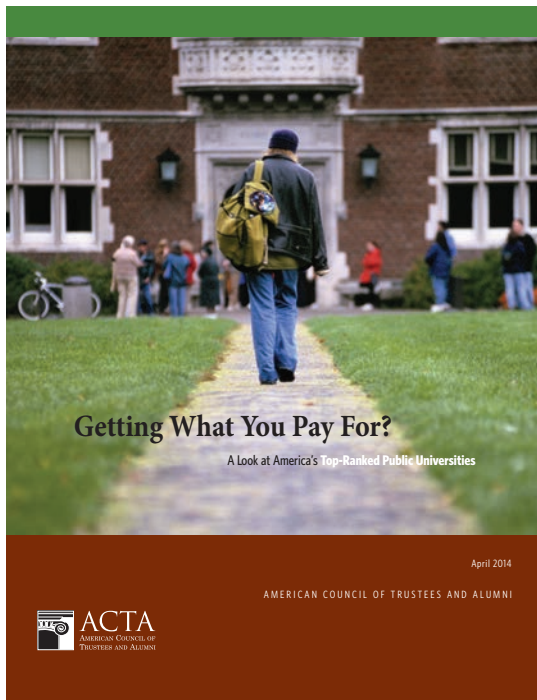
- Instead of cutting costs to lower tuition and help students graduate without crippling debt, over half of the institutions allowed administrative spending to grow faster than instructional spending.
- All 29 institutions have speech code policies leaving students with less freedom than they would have in a grocery store or public park.

Getting What You Pay For?

Getting What You Pay For? examined 52 top-ranked public institutions. The findings were similarly disappointing. In too many states, leading, publicly-funded institutions don't provide students with a solid education at a reasonable price. Shaky curricula, out-sized athletic spending, and misplaced priorities have created a campus environment where too many students graduate ill-prepared, in record debt, and years later than they should—if they graduate at all.



“Society thrives when there is common ground for communication—a common conversation. And the sorry truth is that much of the deterioration we see in our public debate can be traced to deterioration in the academy—seen all too often in liberal arts colleges—of the common core of learning and understanding that connects us as a nation.”



“Overall, these institutions, often called the ‘flagship universities,’ do a poor job of ensuring that undergraduate students engage in an intellectually vibrant campus culture and leave with a solid foundation of common skills and knowledge.”

We found that:

- Of the 52 publicly-funded institutions in the report, not a single one requires even a basic economics course. Just five require a U.S. history or government course.
- The average four-year graduation rate at these institutions was just 53.6%.
- Tuition and fee increases average 31% over five years.
- Faculty teaching assignments are light, often four or fewer courses per year, and many classroom buildings sit empty, especially on Fridays.
- Graduates who borrowed money for college owed between \$16,983 and \$35,168 on average after graduation.
- Public universities in Division I of the NCAA, including many in this report, spend three to six times as much on athletics per athlete than they spend on academics per student.
- 32 of the institutions pay their president a salary that equals or exceeds that of the President of the United States.
- Only 4 of the 52 institutions do not seriously imperil free speech on campus. Over-broad

speech codes threaten a democratic society that relies on debate and multiple perspectives; yet many top-rated public institutions seem willfully to disregard the spirit and letter of the U.S. Constitution.

The report was well received, with one University of Colorado regent taking to the pages of the *Denver Post* to implore his fellows to “step back and decide what is most important for our students” in the face of reported substance abuse, inflated grades, and a “cafeteria line” approach to general education. ACTA’s report, he said, should remind trustees that “[t]he first job of any trustee is to be a fiduciary, to look after the academic and fiscal health of the institution.” *Getting What You Pay For?* showed that these were not anomalous problems—but were the byproduct of a systemic lack of accountability for student learning.

And the reports have initiated important discussions about how to improve higher ed. The president of a liberal arts college, not included in the report, contacted ACTA to learn how to calculate administrative and instructional spending in order to benchmark his college against other peers. Meanwhile, a trustee at Michigan State, which enrolls 50,000 students, requested materials for his

fellow board members and connected ACTA with the university's institutional research office to start a larger conversation about the school's performance.

Striving for the "A"

ACTA's **What Will They Learn?**TM project reached a ripe old age—six years in 2014—and proved that, more than ever, it is changing incentives for the better in higher education.

While most college ratings look at inputs—SAT scores, rank in class, alumni giving—ACTA's **What Will They Learn?**TM online college guide is unique in its focus on the educational value a school offers—what students receive, rather than what they bring to the institution. It offers parents, students, and the general public insight into the nature of schools' general education curricula, their cost, their graduation rates, and whether they foster a robust exchange of ideas on campus.

In 2014, ACTA reviewed the offerings of 1,098 colleges and universities. And it notified each school surveyed of the results—sending a letter explaining the rating and taking to social media

Kathleen Parker on ACTA's *Education or Reputation?*

“American students are paying too much for too little—and this, too, should concern Obama as he examines ways to make college more affordable. Getting people into college is only half the battle. Getting them out with a useful education seems an equal challenge.”

Washington Post, January 28, 2014

The Washington Post

By: KATHLEEN PARKER | January 28, 2014

The diminishing returns of a college education

President Obama is correct in wanting to make higher education more affordable and accessible, but Americans would also be correct in wondering just what they're paying for.

The need for a better-educated populace is beyond dispute. Without critical thinking skills and a solid background in history, the arts and sciences, how can a nation hope to govern itself?

Answer: Look around.

The problem isn't only that higher education is unaffordable to many but that even at our highest-ranked colleges and universities, students aren't getting much bang for their buck.

Since 1985, the price of higher education has increased 538 percent, according to a new study from the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), a nonprofit, nonpartisan research group that encourages trustees and alumni to foster improvement where institutions may be reluctant to go against popular trends.

For perspective, compare tuition increases to a "mere" 286 percent increase in medical costs and a 121 percent increase in the consumer price index during the same period, according to the ACTA.

Although the council confined its research in this study—"Education or Reputation?"—to the 29 top-ranked liberal-arts schools in the nation, where tuition, boarding, and books typically run more than \$50,000 per year, the trends highlighted are not confined to smaller, elite institutions. These include an increasing lack of academic rigor, grade inflation, high administrative costs and a lack of intellectual diversity.

While these recent findings are not so surprising to those who follow such studies, one can still be stunned by what can only be described as a breach of trust between colleges and the students they attract with diversions and amenities that have little bearing on education and that will be of little use in the job market.

One need only be reminded of the recent scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where a whistleblower revealed that phony classes and fake grades have been offered, mostly to athletes, since the 1990s.

UNC, one of the historically great institutions of higher learning quite apart from its legendary basketball team, is scrambling now to repair its damaged reputation with oversight and other fixes. But reputations, cultivated over decades and sometimes centuries, are like love—hard to repair once trust is broken.

On the flip side, the ACTA proposes that many schools, rather

than offering the educational quality that earned them a golden reputation in the first place, often depend on public reverence for the past rather than present performance.

Of great concern is the diminishing focus on core curricula—the traditional arts and science coursework essential to developing the critical thinking necessary for civic participation.

Among the 29 schools surveyed by the ACTA, only three require U.S. government or history, just two require economics and five colleges have no requirements at all.

In a separate study, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy found that though Americans pay the highest per-pupil tuition rates in the world, most graduates fall below proficiency in such simple cognitive tasks as comparing viewpoints in two editorials or buying food when the price is given per ounce.

Instead of the basics, students might look forward to more entertaining fare, such as Middlebury College's "Mad Men and Mad Women," an examination of masculinity and femininity in mid-20th-century America via the television show "Mad Men."

I confess I'd enjoy a dinner discussion along these lines, but as an education consumer, I'm not sure a semester-long investigation is worth even a tiny percentage of the tuition.

ACTA President Anne Neal acknowledged that such courses may be interesting and even valuable. "What we do question, however, is allowing such classes to stand in lieu of a broad-based American history or government requirement," she said, "when we know how severely lacking students' historical literacy can be."

Given the ever-escalating tuition costs, one may wonder where all that money is going.

Out of the 29 colleges evaluated, 22 have administrative budgets that are at least one-third of what the schools spend on instruction. More than a third of the college presidents earn as much or more than the president of the United States (\$400,000) for running these schools, many of which have fewer than 2,000 students.

Other findings of the 46-page report are equally compelling but too lengthy for this space. Summed up, American students are paying too much for too little—and this, too, should concern Obama as he examines ways to make college more affordable. Getting people into college is only half the battle. Getting them out with a useful education seems an equal challenge.



Dr. Michael Poliakoff appeared on the *Wall Street Journal's* **WSJ Live** to discuss *Education or Reputation?* and called out colleges for the disintegration of the core curriculum and lack of academic freedom discussed in the report.

Christopher Newport University took out full-color ads in the *Washington Post* and *Richmond Times-Dispatch* to announce becoming the nation's first public university to receive a perfect "score" in ACTA's What Will They Learn?TM online college guide.



CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

THE ONLY PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN AMERICA TO EARN A PERFECT "A"

Out of 1,100 schools, Christopher Newport is the only public university in the nation to be awarded a perfect "A" by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, honoring our commitment to a rigorous core curriculum that requires courses in American history/government, mathematics, natural science, foreign language, composition, literature and economics.

CNU is different than many other colleges and universities because we care about minds and hearts. Our purpose is to form good citizens

and leaders. We want our students to lead lives of meaning, consequence and purpose. We call that lives of significance.

That's why at CNU we study the liberal arts and sciences and emphasize the study of leadership. That's why we have a rigorous core curriculum and celebrate our honor code and speaking tradition. That's why our students perform thousands of hours of community service. That's what makes us special — and that's why Christopher Newport has become a school of choice for outstanding students and faculty.

See how all schools scored at goacta.org.

1 Avenue of the Arts, Newport News, VA 23606 | (757) 594-7000 | CNU.EDU

as well. Leading up to the official publication, ACTA tweeted each grade with the hashtag #RestoreOurCore, tagging, whenever possible, both the school and president. Schools that did well were excited to re-tweet their success, and Twitter interactions were lively throughout the month of October.

Schools recognize the branding power of a What Will They Learn?TM "A." Of the 23 "A" schools, 15 feature the ACTA "A" logo on their website or otherwise boast about their rating.

The University of Georgia has twice taken justifiable pride in its rating in the president's State of the University address. President Morehead observed in 2014: "We enrolled this fall the most qualified freshman class in UGA history....These are very bright, very capable young individuals, and we owe them an extraordinary university experience....And, we received a grade of 'A' from the American Council of Trustees and Alumni for the strength of our core curriculum." And before him President Adams noted: "In an era of cafeteria course loads at many places, where students are free to choose from an array of courses, this place has remained steadfast in the belief that in the first two years, all students should have a similar liberal arts foundation laid

in preparation for the specialization to come.... Last year, UGA was one of only 21 institutions to receive a grade of A in that survey. We can—and should—all be proud of that recognition.”

Bit by bit, slowly but surely, What Will They Learn?™ is motivating schools to achieve a high rating.

In the last three years, we have been delighted to see three new schools come on board as “A” schools. The Beazley Foundation has been a vital partner in this campaign, making grants only to Virginia institutions that achieved a top rating in What Will They Learn?™ and offering to help schools build capacity to achieve an “A” rating.

Since the partnership began, Bluefield College and Regent University have earned an “A.” And in 2014, after careful deliberation and planning by faculty and administration, Christopher Newport University added required coursework in economics and U.S. history or government, thus becoming the first public university in the country to receive a perfect score. Proud of its performance, the University took out large color ads in the *Washington Post* and *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, as well as an ACTA first: stories in the in-flight magazines of both Delta Airlines and US Airways, outlining the purpose of a strong core curriculum. CNU’s president, former

U.S. senator Paul Trible, proved an effective and insightful partner—with a passion for a rigorous foundation of skills and knowledge.

While there are signs of real progress, there is, admittedly, still much room for improvement. Only 23 institutions out of nearly 1,100—barely 2%—received an “A” grade for requiring at least six of seven subjects essential to a liberal arts education: literature, composition, economics, math, intermediate-level foreign language, science, and U.S. government/history. According to the study, most students graduate from college without exposure to such fundamental courses. In too many places, graduates aren’t expected to have any more knowledge of these pivotal courses than a high school student.

Expanding Our Reach

In the face of employer dissatisfaction and a growing number of reports documenting graduates’ lack of preparation, it is not surprising that more and more people are turning to ACTA’s What Will They Learn?™ as a way of assessing real educational value. Since the October release, the website has had almost 30,000 unique visitors, bringing the total number of visits since ACTA launched the site to over 385,000.



“This is the type of common-sense reform that colleges and universities around the country should implement: a strong foundational education, robust retention and graduation rates, a thoughtful commitment to the pursuit of knowledge, and the tools to ensure students are growing and developing intellectually.”

Paul Trible, president,
Christopher Newport University
Richmond Times-Dispatch
November 3, 2014

“Study Finds Many Colleges Don’t Require Core Subjects Like History, Government” in the *Wall Street Journal*:

“... A majority of U.S. college graduates don’t know the length of a congressional term, what the Emancipation Proclamation was, or which Revolutionary War general led the American troops at Yorktown.

The reason for such failures, according to a recent study: Few schools mandate courses in core subjects like U.S. government, history or economics. The sixth annual analysis of core curricula at 1,098 four-year colleges and universities by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni found that just 18% of schools require American history to graduate, 13% require a foreign language and 3% economics.”

Thanks to the media, attention to What Will They Learn?™ is growing as well. In 2014, stories about the rankings reached millions of readers, appearing in published reports with a total print circulation of 7.5 million—and growing. Interest grew particularly intense after a high-profile article in the *Wall Street Journal* by Doug Belkin, entitled “Study Finds Many Colleges Don’t Require Core Subjects Like History, Government,” which reached 2.4 million readers. *U.S. News & World Report*, the *Huffington Post*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, and many regional publications also covered the report, focusing on local schools’ scores.

In our ongoing campaign to draw attention to strong general education requirements, ACTA reached out for the first time this year to parents and students through PTAs. Our letter to PTAs about What Will They Learn?™ generated multiple inquiries, and we happily gave away dozens of our reports to eager parents at our exhibit at the Virginia PTA convention.

No Big Deal

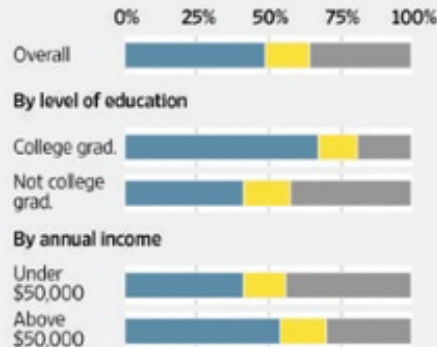
Fewer than a fifth of the American public and private universities reviewed require a history class prior to graduation, which experts say might have something to do with gaps in Americans’ historical knowledge.

Share of 1,098 public and private colleges and universities reviewed that require each subject



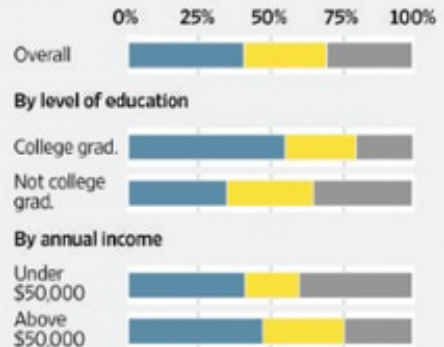
Which president spearheaded the New Deal?

Legend: Franklin D. Roosevelt (correct) (blue), Don't know/refused (grey), Other (T. Roosevelt, LBJ, etc.) (yellow)



When was D-Day?

Legend: June 6, 1944 (correct) (blue), Don't know/refused (grey), Other (Dec. 7, '41, April 25, '45, etc.) (yellow)



Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding
 Source: American Council of Trustees and Alumni (requirements); GfK surveys of approximately 1,000 adults conducted Sept. 5-7 (New Deal) and May 16-18 (D-Day), full-sample margins of error: +/-3 percentage points

The Wall Street Journal

the need for historical literacy. 2014 proved no exception. In fact, ACTA released not one, but two, historical literacy surveys in 2014—**D-Day Knowledge** and **Roosevelt Awareness**—in our campaign to draw attention to America’s growing historical amnesia and the need to reverse it. Both surveys found depressing rates of historical illiteracy among college-educated Americans, providing further evidence of the need to return history to the curriculum.

The first, which focused on D-Day and the history of World War II, found that 25% of Americans couldn’t connect the day to the correct war. A stunning 40% didn’t know the significance of June 6th—the anniversary of D-Day.

The second survey, published just in time for the premiere of Ken Burns’ PBS documentary, “The Roosevelts: An Intimate History,” found that over half of American adults don’t know Franklin D. Roosevelt spearheaded the New Deal.

ACTA’s research is changing the landscape. A new law in Arizona and North Dakota requires students to demonstrate proficiency in civics for high school graduation. The chairman of the house education committee—who sponsored the bill in North Dakota—cited ACTA’s research on historical amnesia in calling for support of the bill, which was signed into law by the governor in early 2015.

Eighteen other states are currently considering this significant legislation.

“I am appreciative of your efforts to promote civic literacy and reinforce the importance of this educational foundation at the college level.”

The Honorable Sandra Day O’Connor
former Associate Justice, United States Supreme Court





Academic Freedom

Challenging the Culture of Offense

Warning! Trigger Warning! This speech may contain traumatic subject matter for those who believe our colleges and universities have an obligation to foster a robust exchange of ideas in the pursuit of truth.

That's the warning that ACTA president Anne Neal delivered at the City Club of Cleveland when she addressed the threat political correctness poses to academic freedom at America's colleges and universities. Neal spoke out against the stifling climate of speech restrictions that places civility and students' intellectual comfort before higher education's obligation to foster the search for truth and meaning.

The result is, frankly, unacceptable. Students gain neither the capacity to think critically, nor even a basic familiarity with the best that has been thought and said.

In her speech, which aired multiple times on C-SPAN, Neal offered a thoroughgoing rebuttal to this new campus orthodoxy. She declared the time has come to recognize the culture of offense for what it is: "nothing short of a war on youth, endangering the empowerment and training of our next generation of leaders." She admonished those who would—under the banner of academic freedom itself—declare whole

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disciplines, entire political perspectives, and influential thinkers too controversial for the college classroom. Rather than ensuring that our youth are educated in the spirit of free inquiry, the current academic culture hobbles them as scholars and as people.

In *Governance for a New Era*, and elsewhere, ACTA's message is clear: university leaders and concerned academics must reverse this trend, and we have been especially vocal about the need to end the shameful practice of "disinviting" visiting speakers. Condoleezza Rice, Christine Lagarde, George Will, Ayaan Hirsi Ali. On each occasion, as students and faculty sought to shut down controversial speakers, ACTA was front and center calling for a robust exchange of ideas and condemning the close-minded culture of censorship on campus.

Tracking "Disinvitations"

ACTA reflected on the shameful nature of disinvitations, condemning each new example of intolerance and dogmatism with targeted media responses, as

well as by calling out the offending institutions on our blog, The Forum, and on social media.

Happily, ACTA's argument for dialogue and openness is gaining real traction.

In June, Harvard commencement speaker, former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, minced no words in labeling the illiberalism of disinvitations as an outrage and calling trustees to respond. After receiving a letter from ACTA emphasizing the importance of a robust exchange of ideas, Yale's president, Peter Salovey, spoke to the incoming class of Yalies about the supreme value of academic freedom. President Salovey drew often from the C. Vann Woodward report, which is featured in ACTA's *Free to Teach, Free to Learn* as a compelling defense of free expression and the dangers of political entanglement. And after ACTA criticized Brandeis for disinviting a speaker and urged the board to take steps to enhance speech protections and appreciate a diversity of viewpoints, the board announced that its president would be stepping down.

“[T]he dominance of political correctness on our campuses amounts to nothing short of a war on youth, endangering the empowerment and training of our next generation of leaders.... American higher education has long been the envy of the world....it will continue to be only if true academic freedom returns as a campus value of paramount importance.”

Anne D. Neal

in a speech at the City Club of Cleveland that aired frequently on C-SPAN



Early in the year, ACTA lambasted Brandeis for disinviting Ayaan Hirsi Ali in a letter to the *New York Times*—just one of many high-profile ACTA media placements. In what may be a first, we were even invited by the *New York Times* to provide an article on the matter, and we were most happy to oblige.

At much the same time, ACTA joined with other campus organizations and penned a letter to the provost of the University of California calling on her to affirm the system's policy against politicization in the classroom, arguing: "UC's provost has rightfully sent a memorandum to all UC chancellors enumerating the school's policies which prohibit co-opting the classroom for ideological ends. The UC System must continue taking these positive precautions and forcefully, publicly, and unequivocally reiterate its policy against co-opting the classroom for political indoctrination and make it clear that there will be sanctions against those faculty who use the classroom to push an anti-Israel, pro-BDS agenda."

In the face of this strong request, the provost affirmed the university's adherence to professional responsibility, and ACTA and other reform advocates won a victory for students' academic freedom in the classroom. ACTA also joined with the American Association of University Professors and nearly 100 college and university presidents in condemning the American Studies Association (ASA), when it voted to endorse an academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions. ACTA's Michael Poliakoff and former National Endowment for the

Humanities chairman Bruce Cole co-authored a column in the *Daily Caller*, exposing the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the anti-Israel activities of both the ASA and the Modern Language Association.

And ACTA also seized the opportunity to praise schools that resisted attempts to silence speakers with a heckler's veto. We applauded Miami University and Michigan State University, both of which allowed George Will to speak despite vocal student opposition.

Resisting Government Overreach

One of the toughest issues facing colleges and universities is striking a balance between fighting sexual violence and protecting the rights of the accused. But when the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights lay down a federal plan with little regard for constitutional protection or the rightful role of law enforcement, ACTA was one of the first to take a stand.

Appearing prominently in the *New York Times*, PBS News Hour, *Los Angeles Times*, *National Public Radio* (three times), and numerous other media outlets, ACTA president Anne Neal condemned this federal overreach that

undermines constitutional rights and creates a veritable system of shadow justice. And in a statement released on Capitol Hill, she called for defunding the Office to stop its unjustified and unconstitutional intrusions: “Students, by being students, do not merit a separate system of ‘shadow’ justice that gives vast powers to ill-equipped campus bureaucrats. To do so creates two legal systems in our country....OCR should not be allowed, for example, to lower evidentiary standards in disregard of constitutional principles and Americans’ deep respect for due process—by bureaucratic fiat. Yet, this is exactly what has happened.”

Promoting Intellectual Diversity

Too many institutions have policies in place that restrict expression or discourage the free exchange of ideas. That’s why ACTA is working each and every day to ensure intellectual diversity and to make sure institutions take the steps to assess their campus climate to ensure free and open debate. This year we were pleased to support intellectual diversity—and intelligent giving that makes it possible—with the introduction

ACTA on Sexual Assault at Colleges and Universities

In the *New York Times*

Anne Neal: “Colleges are simply unable to play judge, jury and executioner when they’re already having trouble playing educator.”

On PBS NewsHour

Anne Neal: “And rather than trying to make our colleges and universities an extension of law enforcement, let’s put the responsibility where it should be—in the police room and in the courts.”



The New York Times

By: JENNIFER STEINHAEUER | July 30, 2014

Senators Offer Bill to Curb Campus Sexual Assault

WASHINGTON—A bipartisan group of senators on Wednesday introduced legislation designed to curb the startling number of sexual assaults on college campuses. The measure would require schools to make public the result of anonymous surveys concerning assault on campuses, and impose significant financial burdens on universities that fail to comply with some of the law’s requirements.

The legislation comes as the White House is putting increased pressure on colleges and universities. The administration formed a task force in January to address the issue, and the group found that one in five female college students in the United States has been assaulted.

“Very rarely does a bill become a truly collaborative process, and this bill has been truly collaborative and bipartisan,” said Senator Claire McCaskill, Democrat of Missouri, who has spent the last several months studying the problem of sexual assault on campus.

Earlier this year, the Department of Education released the names of 55 colleges and universities that are under investigation for their handling of sexual assault complaints. It was the first time a comprehensive list of colleges under investigation for potential violations of federal antidiscrimination law under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was made public, further pressuring Congress to act.

The new measure would require every university in the United States to conduct anonymous surveys of students about their experience with sexual violence on campus, with the results published online. The survey, which had been pushed for by sexual assault victims, is similar to one conducted by the military, and would allow parents and high school students to make comparative choices.

The bill would also increase the financial risk for schools that do not comply with certain requirements of the bill, like conducting the surveys. Schools would face possible penalties of up to 1 percent of their operating budget; previously, universities that violated student rights in sexual assault cases risked the loss of federal funding, but the punishment was never been applied and lawmakers said it was impractical.

The bill increases penalties under the Clery Act—a federal law requiring all colleges and universities receiving federal financial aid to disclose information about campus crimes—to up to \$150,000 per violation, from \$35,000. Last year, the Department of Education fined Yale University \$165,000 for failing to disclose four sexual offenses involving force that had occurred over several years, and other schools have also been fined.

The proposed legislation would also require colleges and uni-

versities to provide confidential advisers to help victims report their crime and receive services. Schools would be prohibited from punishing a student for things like underage drinking if they are reporting a sexual violence claim.

Amie Clark and Andrea Pino, co-founders of End Rape on Campus, a group that provides support for students who are filing sexual assault complaints, also attended the news conference.

Ms. Clark said that after she reported being raped to administrators at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, she was told that rape is like a football game and that she should look back at the game and figure out what she had done wrong.

At Occidental College, Ms. Clark said, students accused of rape are punished by being assigned book reports. “This is the state of colleges and universities in America,” she said “and we have the power to change that.”

Ms. Pino spoke of waking up one Sunday morning in a pool of blood with bruises from her attack. “I was told I just couldn’t handle college,” she said.

Some colleges expressed concerns about the legislation.

“Colleges are simply unable to play judge, jury and executioner when they’re already having trouble playing educator,” Anne Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, said in a written statement. “Resources are limited and colleges must put their focus on their primary objective: education.”

The bill attracted a diverse group of co-sponsors, including Ms. McCaskill, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York, Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa, and Senator Kelly Ayotte, Republican of New Hampshire, as well as other members of both parties.

The bill, “aims to codify much of what the Department of Education is already encouraging or requiring universities to do as part of their obligations under Title IX,” said Erin Buzavis, a professor at the Western New England University School of Law and expert on Title IX. “However, it makes a big difference to have these requirements spelled out in a statute versus a policy interpretation issued by the agency, because a statute is more permanent.”

The provisions of this legislation that would create financial penalties for noncompliance “is a real game-changer,” Ms. Buzavis added, “because it creates, for the first time, an incentive for universities to address campus sexual assault in a proactive manner.”

“Our students deserve better than this,” Ms. Gillibrand said. “The price of a college education should not include a 1-in-5 chance of being sexually assaulted.”



ACTA co-sponsored the “Academic Freedom and the Global University” seminar at Columbia’s Law School. Then-dean David M. Schizer and professor Phillip Hamburger spoke to a standing-room-only crowd as nearly 80 students attended.

of a new initiative: ACTA’s **Oases of Excellence**, thanks to the generous support of long-time ACTA supporter **John R. Wilson**.

The Oases of Excellence project provides a growing directory of campus centers and programs dedicated to disappearing and underappreciated disciplines, such as American history, Western civilization, political theory, economics, leadership, and the Great Books. ACTA believes these studies are critical to a well-rounded and historically-informed perspective on the world, and we are pleased to promote their endeavors.

The most recent addition—**Columbia University’s Center on Law and Liberty**—brings the grand total to 53 centers. The resource offers higher education donors ways to promote free thought and student inquiry and facilitates cross-pollination by publicizing programs and speakers through ACTA’s social media network. Leading up to the Center’s opening was a seminar that ACTA co-sponsored at Columbia’s Law School on “**Academic Freedom and the Global University.**” Nearly 80 attended this session, which featured an introduction by Columbia Law School’s David M. Schizer and a presentation by professor Phillip Hamburger, who was a key contributor in ACTA’s *Free to Teach, Free to Learn* trustee guide.

This year also saw a major victory for donor intent at Trinity College after years of struggle. In 1977, Shelby Cullom Davis—the late father of ACTA friend Diana Davis Spencer—established a fund at Trinity College in Connecticut with explicit written instructions to use it to teach students about private enterprise and entrepreneurship, which had made Mr. Davis so very successful as a businessman and investor. But over the years, Trinity began diverting the funds in ways that violated the donor’s wishes. The professor who held the chair that Mr. Davis endowed, Gerald Gunderson, alerted the Connecticut attorney general’s office, and ACTA chimed in with correspondence to the board demanding adherence to donor intent. Finally, at the end of 2014, Trinity signed an agreement bringing the fund into legal compliance, and now Trinity students will continue to have the opportunity to learn about the workings of the free market.

Improving the Campus Climate

Following our recommendation and using material from ACTA’s reports, the University of Colorado followed through on its pledge to conduct a system-wide survey to address disciplinary and intellectual diversity. Despite a

long and contentious debate over the details of the plan, the University, bolstered by the courageous engagement of regents Dr. James Geddes and Susan Sharkey, pushed the survey forward. The results—published in July—showed that, as the trustees feared, many students felt pressure to hold particular political beliefs. A full 23% of students indicated they felt “intimidated to share their ideas, opinions, and beliefs in class” because of their political philosophy. To address this troubling climate, the board has adopted policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of political affiliation and political philosophy. This has brought new academic freedom protections to a system that educates more than 60,000 students and has underscored the important role trustees must play to defend intellectual diversity on campus.

Protecting Free Association

In addition to advocacy and media campaigns, ACTA is communicating our concern directly to campus stakeholders. This year we engaged with leaders at Bowdoin, asking them to reverse a policy which has decertified a Bible Study group because it insisted that its leaders agree with Christian principles.

We also wrote to Trinity College, urging them to reverse a policy adopted by the past president which would require all fraternities and sororities to go “co-ed,” effectively ending Greek life at this institution. Greek organizations have too often been an attractive scapegoat.

“The American Council of Trustees and Alumni has been watching the spectacle of ‘disinvitation season,’ when universities cave in to the loudest bullies. We call on...higher education leaders everywhere to withstand this trend and to stand firm in defense of the free exchange of ideas—the essence of a liberal education.”

Anne D. Neal, president, ACTA
in letter to the *New York Times*, April 11, 2014





Getting the Word Out

Making Headlines

ACTA's time has come. On television, radio, or in the newspapers, we are now driving the national discussion on the future of higher education.

Our total print circulation in 2014 nearly doubled from last year's figure to a total of 67.2 million, with coverage spanning 49 states—as well as Europe and the Caribbean.

We were mentioned in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *USA Today*, *Forbes*, the *Huffington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and many more. Television and radio appearances included the PBS NewsHour, C-SPAN, NPR, as well as local news stations across the country.

We expanded our social media outreach efforts as well, topping 2,000 followers on Twitter and observing a marked increase in audience engagement on our Facebook page—in 2014, twice as many people shared ACTA content on Facebook as in 2013.

Our in-house blog, *The Forum*, received over 22,000 unique visitors this year and our contributions to external blogs more than doubled.

Bold Leadership Real Reform

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI 2014

Reaching the Higher Ed Community

Trustees. Our network includes trustees from nearly every one of the four-year institutions offering a liberal arts degree. The network is comprised of over 17,000 trustees at more than 1,100 institutions.

Alumni. Our quarterly newsletter *Inside Academe* reaches nearly 13,000 alumni, representing a range of higher education institutions. Over 3,000 receive our monthly eNewsletters as well as e-mail updates announcing new projects, exciting events, and major accomplishments.

Governors and State Policymakers. ACTA regularly reaches out to all 50 governors and their education policy staff, as well as to many state policymakers and legislators.

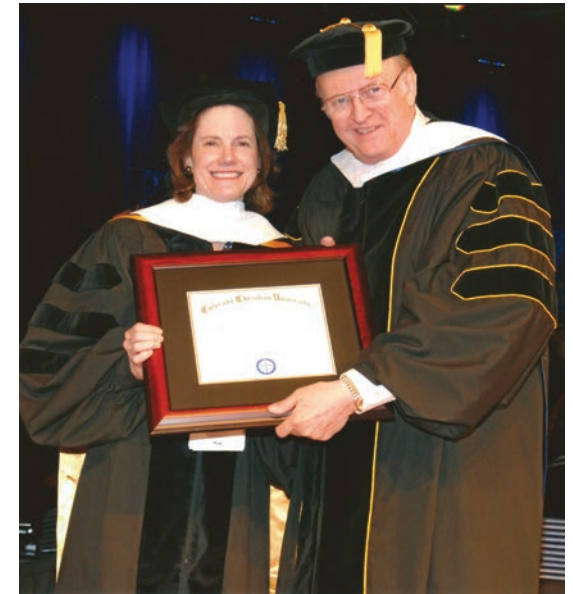
ACTA “On the Road”

Highlights from 2014 include:

- ACTA hosts a salon for our supporters with Columbia law school professor Philip

Hamburger and then-dean David M. Schizer in New York City.

- Anne Neal and Andrew Kelly of AEI present at the Council for Higher Education Accreditation conference.
- Anne Neal participates in “Liberty, Higher Education, and the Role of Trustees” Liberty Fund roundtable in Florida.
- Michael Poliakoff presents “Liberal Arts ‘Lite’” at a joint National Association of Scholars and Maine Heritage Policy Center panel.
- Anne Neal speaks before the Republican Governors Association’s Executive Roundtable Meeting as part of a panel on higher education.
- ACTA hosts a salon for our supporters with historian Ed Larson in Washington, DC.
- Anne Neal delivers the commencement speech “Liberty and Learning” to the graduating seniors of Colorado Christian University.
- Michael Poliakoff presents “Science Literacy and the Duty of Higher Education” at the IFIC Science Communications Summit.



In May, ACTA president Anne Neal was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humanities by Colorado Christian University. President Bill Armstrong called Neal “one of the great educational reformers of our time.” Neal also delivered the commencement speech “Liberty and Learning” to the class of 2014, imparting lessons from the Founding Fathers.

- Anne Neal speaks at a meeting of the Fortnightly Club in Chicago on “The Exploding Cost of College.”
- Michael Poliakoff is appointed to the Department of Education’s Advisory Committee on Federal Student Assistance.
- ACTA hosts a salon for our supporters with author Doug White in New York City.
- ACTA partners with The Aspen Institute to host “Measuring Academic Outcomes: How Trustees Support Student Learning” seminar in Richmond, Virginia.
- Anne Neal attends meetings as a member of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI).
- Michael Poliakoff presents “Students, Citizens, and Leaders: Our Nation’s Future” at the Bill of Rights Constitutional Academy.
- Anne Neal participates in the Council for Higher Education Accreditation discussion “Exploring Quality Review for Non-Institutional Education Providers.”
- Anne Neal and Hank Brown speak on accreditation at a Heritage Foundation panel “The Higher Education Act and Accreditation Reform.”
- Michael Poliakoff presents a paper at the Council on Independent Colleges Steering

Committee for the Project on the Future of Independent Higher Education.

- Anne Neal and Michael Poliakoff are featured in “The Costs of College,” a short documentary about the rising cost of tuition, sponsored by the Moving Picture Institute.
- Anne Neal participates in the University Innovation Alliance discussion “Collaboration to Dramatically Improve Low-income Student Success.”
- ACTA partners with The Aspen Institute to host “Planning and Leadership: How Trustees and Presidents Work Together” seminar in Cambridge.
- Anne Neal joins the host committee for Foundation for Individual Rights in Education’s 15th Anniversary.
- Anne Neal and Michael Poliakoff present at the Conference of Board Chairs of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges.
- Anne Neal speaks at The City Club of Cleveland on political correctness.
- Michael Poliakoff participates in the Center for College Affordability and Productivity seminar on education policy.
- Anne Neal delivers a message of protest at NACIQI.

- Anne Neal addresses the Florida Board of Governors Trustee Summit, “Charting a Path for the Future—Facing Challenges with Innovative Solutions.”
- ACTA provides recommendations for higher education to new District of Columbia mayor-elect Muriel Bowser and her staff.

ATHENA Roundtable

Higher! Despite a wide range of topics and perspectives, ACTA’s 2014 ATHENA Roundtable converged on a single directive: that the time has come to raise the bar higher for our colleges and universities. It is time to put the “higher” back in higher education. How to achieve such a feat? The knowledgeable trustees, educators, policymakers, and alumni leaders that joined us at Columbia’s beautiful Italian Academy last November had many ideas.

Panelists, including the Honorable Richard Bray, president of the Beazley Foundation; chairman of the City University of New York Board of Trustees, Benno Schmidt; and University of Colorado president Hank Brown, offered concrete solutions to improve student learning, lower the costs of college, and take American higher ed into the 21st century.



Peter Alcock



Richard DeMillo, KC Johnson, and Benno Schmidt



Roger Hertog



Paul Tribe and Richard Bray



Robert Caro



Betty Capaldi Phillips



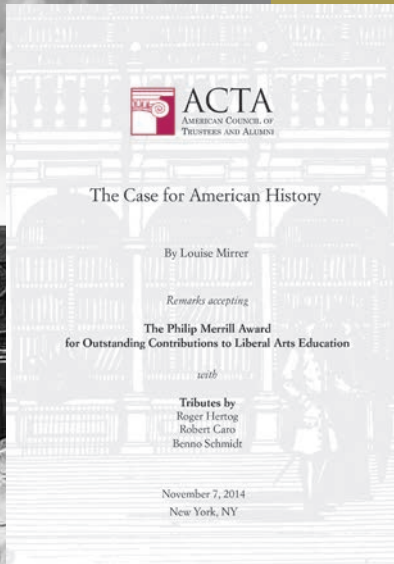
Goldie Blumenstyk



Frank Brogan



Rick O'Donnell, Paul Gaston, Clara Lovett, and Hank Brown



“[W]here American history has become a discipline and a course in which individual histories are all placed together on an equal footing, our exhibitions make it clear that it is only because of the ideas on which our nation was founded—that all men are created equal and have certain unalienable Rights, among them Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness—that today these individual histories can flower and be told.”

Dr. Louise Mirrer

“The Case for American History”



Anne Neal with Merrill Award recipient Dr. Louise Mirrer.

The day opened with a panel on restoring academic excellence to America’s colleges and universities, which featured Paul Trible, president of Virginia’s Christopher Newport University. Christopher Newport’s innovative partnership with the Beazley Foundation vastly improved the school’s general education program and provides a model of successful curricular reform.

The discussions were lively and productive, aided by the diversity of perspectives among both our panelists and Roundtable attendees. In our final panel—asking why students are getting so little “bang for their buck”—we heard from the *Chronicle of Higher Education’s* Goldie Blumenstyk, former Arizona State University provost Betty Capaldi Phillips, and Pennsylvania State System chancellor Frank Brogan. There were many questions and, had time allowed, the discussions could have gone well into the night.

2014 Philip Merrill Award

“Where American history now so often means the histories of diverse Americans, our exhibition program tells the story of how American it is to be diverse,” Louise Mirrer, winner of ACTA’s 10th Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education, proclaimed in her acceptance speech at Manhattan’s Colony Club.

As president and CEO of the New-York Historical Society, Mirrer has dedicated her life to teaching Americans about our exceptional history. Her acceptance speech was a thoroughgoing defense of the historical importance of the American project.

Several friends and colleagues paid tribute to Mirrer's work both with the New-York Historical Society and as a historian at the City University of New York, where she spearheaded the U.S. History Initiative. Roger Hertog, former chairman of the New-York Historical Society, thanked Mirrer for her incredible leadership, and Robert Caro, one of America's most celebrated biographers, discussed his childhood love of the New-York Historical Society and the way in which Mirrer has restored it to the landmark of his youth. Benno Schmidt, chairman of the CUNY Board of Trustees, spoke of Mirrer's time as a history professor at CUNY and how her dedication made the U.S. History Initiative a great success.

Celebrating the Liberal Arts: The Merrill Award at 10

2014 was a special year for us since it marked the 10th anniversary of the Philip Merrill Award. To celebrate the occasion, we produced a short film

on Mr. Merrill's legacy, the importance of the liberal arts, and ACTA's 10-year effort to honor those keeping liberal education alive. The presentation was screened during the Merrill Award gala dinner, featuring several previous award winners—Tom Rollins, Robert George, and Donald Kagan—who made a stirring case for academic excellence.

"The purpose of solid, liberal arts education is to create fully formed human beings," states Rollins, founder of The Teaching Company, in the opening segment. Professor George added, "It means to be enriched, to be deepened, even to be ennobled, intellectually and—ideally—morally, by one's engagement with the best that has been thought and said."

Like the late Philip Merrill, a successful businessman and philanthropist, ACTA argues that everyone benefits from a solid background in the liberal arts. Not only does such a background offer a more complete and fulfilling life, but also the common education for citizens fundamental to our democratic system.

For 10 years, ACTA has uniquely honored those who work to preserve this grand undertaking. We are encouraged daily by those men and women who have risen to the challenge.





Not exempt from the reach of What Will They Learn?™, ACTA's staff—wearing garb from their alma maters—displayed the grades their institutions earned.

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Bold Leadership Real Reform

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Scholar-in-Residence

Clara Lovett
President Emerita of Northern Arizona University

Council of Scholars

The distinguished professors who comprise ACTA's Council of Scholars provide guidance on academic policy issues. Small working groups of the Council help ACTA set appropriate standards and criteria for our What Will They Learn?™ core curriculum project.

George E. Andrews
*Evan Pugh Professor of Mathematics
Pennsylvania State University*

Mark Bauerlein
Professor of English, Emory University

Marc Zvi Brettler
*Dora Golding Professor of Biblical Studies
Brandeis University*



Dr. Clara Lovett, ACTA's first scholar-in-residence, is a distinguished scholar, president emerita of Northern Arizona University, and a proponent of the promising competency-based approach to education. She collaborated with several governors on the creation of Western Governors' University, the first accredited institution in the nation to award degrees based on demonstrated competencies rather than accumulation of credit hours and one of the first online universities in the world.

In August, ACTA interns were treated to a special tour of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Library of Congress. The interns were immersed in our country's rich history of scholarship and the preservation of knowledge as they explored the halls of the Thomas Jefferson Building and the magnificent sculpture of its Main Reading Room. The tour culminated in a private, panoramic view of the District from atop the dome of the Jefferson Building.



William Cook
Distinguished Teaching Professor of History
SUNY-Geneseo

Paul Davies
Professor of Philosophy, College of William & Mary

David C. Doughty, Jr.
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Judith Farr
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Professor of Ethics and Public Policy, Graduate School of Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School

Joyce Lee Malcolm
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Fellow of the Royal Historical Society

Matthew A. Malkan
Professor of Astrophysics, UCLA

Michael Podgursky
Professor of Economics, University of Missouri

James A. Sellers
Professor and Director of Undergraduate Mathematics, Pennsylvania State University

Fellows and Interns

ACTA's internship program offers a unique educational experience to talented college students and recent graduates. Our spring and

summer interns perform critical research on the What Will They Learn?™ project as well as other key research, outreach and writing tasks. They also experience the joys of vigorous dialogue through our summer speaker series, which invites eminent scholars to address our interns on important topics in higher education. This year interns met with former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Dr. Bruce Cole, and toured the Library of Congress with Congressman Tom Petri.

Donors and Donor Societies

ACTA maintains prized intellectual independence because we receive no money from universities or government; generous donors sustain all of our efforts. This year donations to ACTA broke our previous records. More than 800 individuals and foundations supported ACTA at record levels in 2014. Together these supporters contributed more than \$2.8 million. We are honored by the trust our donors place in us—and inspired by their commitment to restoring excellence in higher education! Our donors' generosity in 2014 allowed us to continue our signature projects and to launch the new initiatives highlighted in this report.

Meeting Education Leaders

ACTA donor society members are invited to exclusive events where they meet important



Columbia professor and expert on philanthropy, **Doug White**, riveted ACTA's supporters with his tale of how Princeton University came to misuse the Robertson family's gift, ultimately valued at \$900 million; he observed that this disregard of donor intent was not an isolated case. Advising college and university donors is central to ACTA's mission, and we are proud to have helped the Robertson family.

scholars and education-reform leaders in an intimate setting. We appreciate these opportunities to know our donor society members and hear their concerns about American higher education. Dinners and gatherings are a small way to acknowledge those who have done so much, not only for ACTA, but for American higher education.

In February of 2014, ACTA donors gathered at the Cosmopolitan Club in New York City—with its spectacular views of Midtown—to hear from Columbia Law School then-dean David Schizer and professor of law Philip Hamburger. Schizer and Hamburger spoke about the challenges to freedom of speech at universities today.

ACTA supporters gathered in Washington, DC in April to celebrate the 225th anniversary of George Washington's inauguration and to hear Pulitzer-Prize winning historian Edward Larson speak about George Washington's role at the Constitutional Convention—the subject of his new book, *The Return of George Washington*.

In June, ACTA returned to the Cosmopolitan Club, where ACTA supporters met Columbia University professor Doug White, who spoke about the landmark donor intent case *Robertson v. Princeton*—a case in which ACTA played a part. Guests were presented with copies of Professor White's just-released book, *Abusing Donor Intent*, which mentions ACTA's role in helping ensure donor intent.

If you would like to learn more about joining one of ACTA's donor societies, please give us a call!





In Memoriam

Herman Badillo

Walter Berns

Graham Down

Leonard Liggio

Albert Merck

Robert D. Stuart, Jr.

Ruth G. Thoensen

Karl Zimmer



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