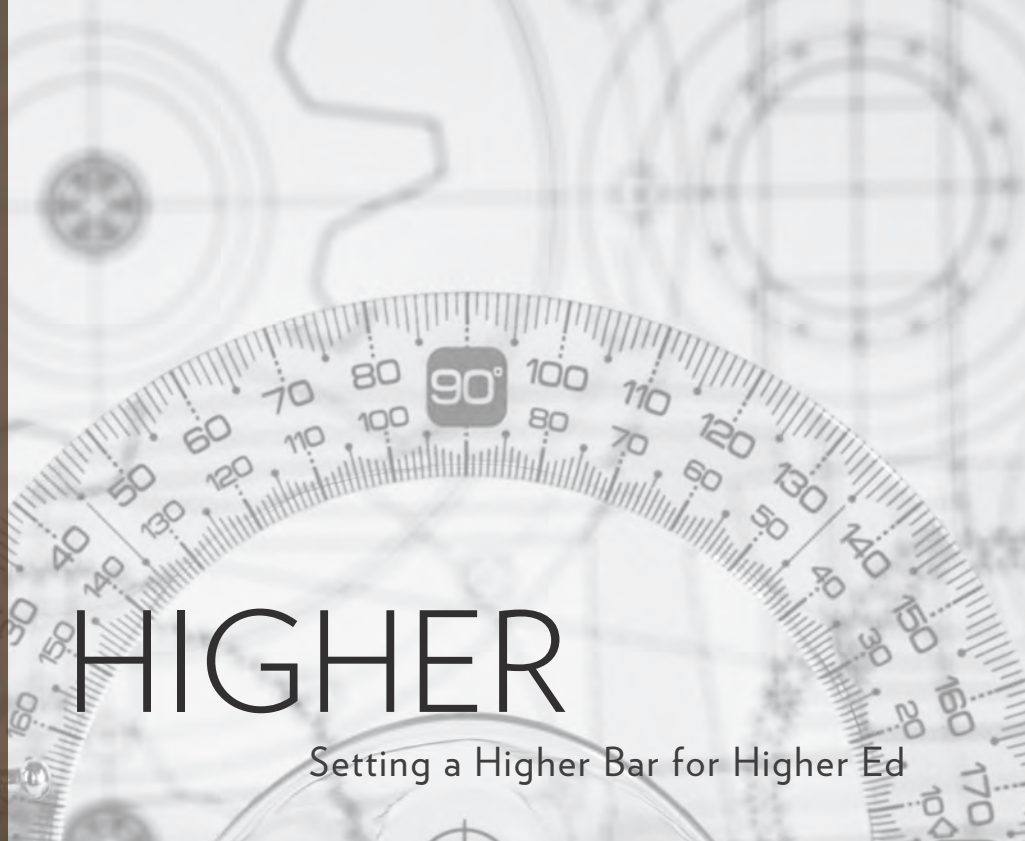




HIGHER

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

2013 Annual Report



HIGHER

Setting a Higher Bar for Higher Ed

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 16,000 current board members. Our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, reaches nearly 13,000 readers.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) is leading the charge to return “higher” to higher education. As outlined in the following pages, we are challenging the status quo to restore academic freedom, academic rigor, and real accountability to higher education. And, we are doing so with an ever-widening network of supporters and partners.

Despite the vital importance of education to our nation’s economic and civic future, too few colleges are delivering an education of quality. Employers—in large numbers—are saying that college graduates don’t have the skills or knowledge they need to fill jobs in the rapidly changing marketplace. Surveys show that college graduates, including those from elite institutions, lack fundamental academic skills and are ignorant of the very basics of citizenship. They don’t know the term lengths of Congress and they can’t identify the father of the United States Constitution.

One thing is perfectly clear: Higher education needs to reclaim the standards of “higher,” and liberal arts colleges must rededicate themselves to the liberality of mind.

Our goal is to ensure that American higher education remains the finest in the world, and to insist that trustees, administrators, and faculty do their jobs.



To put it bluntly, the future of our country depends upon it.

Administrative bloat, excessive tuition increases, weak or vague curricula, a lack of intellectual diversity, speech codes, and abuses of donor intent—these are problems, and they are problems that ACTA is addressing like no other organization.

ACTA was founded to hold colleges accountable for the mission of teaching citizens in a democratic republic. Each day, in ways large and small, we are articulating a vision that will guide college leadership for the class of 2020, the class of 2025, and beyond.

We're insisting that policymakers, trustees, administrators, and faculty raise their sites—aim higher—and they are.

Inside, you'll read about the many ways ACTA is defining a stronger, freer, more accountable future in higher ed, thanks to your support.

- ACTA's *Free to Teach, Free to Learn* guide is equipping trustees to demand intellectual diversity and real academic freedom on campus.
- Our trenchant criticisms are forcing the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice to rethink intrusive new guidelines that allow the federal government to interfere in free speech and free association.
- Our advocacy for a rigorous core curriculum and strong foundation is prompting schools to improve their curricula to achieve "A" ratings in What Will They Learn?[™] and thereby better prepare their graduates for the workplace and life-long learning.
- Our calls to reform the broken higher education accreditation system are attracting national recognition and a growing list of college leaders, members of Congress, and even the President who share our concerns.

Ours is a call for an education of intellectual growth, an education that expands perspectives and liberates minds, an education that prepares students for career and community.

- Our demands for affordable higher education and transparency of results are gathering adherents across party lines and prompting institutions to freeze tuition and align limited resources more effectively.
- Our reader-friendly studies, brochures, and dashboard reports on curricular improvement, academic freedom, presidential selection, and more are empowering boards to take their responsibility seriously—making ACTA a go-to resource for reform-minded trustees.

As outlined in the following pages, ACTA is charting a different course for higher education, offering a concrete, proven prescription for change. Ours is not a call for more money or a rationalization for higher tuitions or more student services. Money is not the problem.

Ours is a call for an education of intellectual growth, an education that expands perspectives and liberates minds, an education that prepares

students for career and community.

With your help, ACTA is doing more than any other organization to set a higher bar for higher ed. We are working to ensure that institutions protect the free exchange of ideas, require a more rigorous curriculum, maintain affordable tuition—set higher standards. Read on to see what your support makes possible!

With warm best wishes and sincere thanks,



Anne D. Neal
President

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

DEFINING AND PRESERVING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

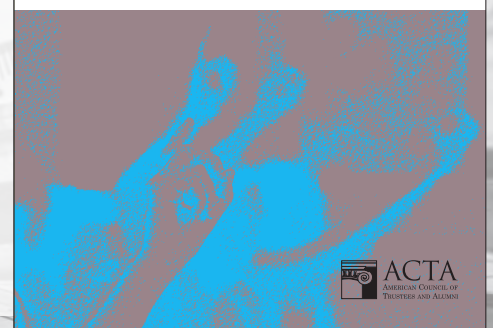
What is academic freedom? Does it only apply to professors, or do students also have rights and privileges? What is the difference between using academic freedom and abusing it? These are critical questions. But when it comes to answers, confusion reigns. Academic freedom has been invoked to defend research misconduct, sexual involvement with students, and political harangues in the classroom. Professional associations such as the American Association of University Professors and the American Federation of Teachers have embraced academic freedom as a matter of rights, job security, and collective bargaining, rather than academic accountability.

That's why, in 2013, ACTA issued the definitive new guide for trustees on this most important principle of quality education, *Free to Teach, Free to Learn: Understanding and Maintaining Academic Freedom in Higher Education*. Higher education's most thoughtful leaders, including Larry Summers, José

Free to Teach, Free to Learn



Understanding and Maintaining Academic Freedom in Higher Education
A Trustee Guide from
the AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI



ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

Cabranes, Kate Stith-Cabranes, Alan Charles Kors, and Harvey Silverglate contributed new essays on what academic freedom means—and how to protect it—in a report that assembles key documents on the fundamental principles of academic freedom and case studies presenting the kinds of conflicts trustees are likely to encounter.

The report was released at a New York City conference of educational leaders keynoted by City University of New York board chairman Benno



Benno Schmidt discusses ACTA’s academic freedom project on *Wall Street Journal Live*.

Schmidt, followed by lively discussions led by contributors Neil Hamilton, Donald Downs, Schmidt, and Philip Hamburger. Interest was so high that the *Wall Street Journal* reached out to Benno Schmidt for a segment on *Wall Street Journal Live*, which underscored the need for boards to demand academic responsibility and to fight threats to academic freedom from within the academy.

A few months later, Schmidt took to the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* when Purdue University president Mitch Daniels came under attack for his criticism of the work of historian Howard Zinn. Citing

ACTA’s report, Schmidt called on university leaders to undertake a needed campus-wide conversation about academic freedom and scholarly standards of integrity.

PROMOTING INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY

Too many institutions have policies in place that restrict expression or discourage the free exchange of ideas. That’s why ACTA’s *Free to Teach* Report called on trustees everywhere to ensure intellectual diversity and to take steps to obtain baseline information through campus climate surveys and other measures. Following our recommendation and using material from ACTA’s reports, the University of Colorado regents voted unanimously to conduct a system-wide campus climate survey to address disciplinary and intellectual diversity. They also passed a resolution prohibiting discrimination on the basis of political affiliation and political philosophy—adding to existing protections against discrimination on the basis of race and sex. This has brought new academic freedom protections to a system that educates more than 60,000 students!

FIGHTING GOVERNMENT OVERREACH

One of the toughest issues facing colleges and universities is striking a balance between fighting sexual harassment and protecting the free speech of students. But when the federal Departments of Justice and Education used a case in Montana to lay down a federal “blueprint” on sexual harassment that jeopardized free speech on campuses throughout the country, ACTA took a stand. The government’s new standards were vague, burdensome, and offered with little regard for the U.S. Constitution. We joined the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) and over two dozen organizations and scholars in sending an **open letter** to the departments demanding an immediate retraction and clarification of the overly broad standards.

At the same time, ACTA and FIRE leaders penned a letter to 850 board chairs warning them about the threat to free speech posed by the new federal standards: “Trustees have a solemn obligation to protect and defend the free exchange of ideas and academic freedom on college campuses.... [W]e urge you to oppose any efforts by your institution to comply with the government’s announced changes, pending the release of a binding standard that explicitly overturns current precedent.”

In the face of our vigorous complaints, the federal government backed down. The Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights announced that the standards set out in the Montana case did not represent a new policy for schools across the nation. Though concerns still remain, ACTA and other free speech activists won a victory for the First Amendment and academic freedom.

PROTECTING OPEN DEBATE

It’s no wonder that the public is losing trust in the academy since too many faculty no longer endorse unfettered discussion and debate. Sadly, 2013 saw the American Studies Association (ASA), a faculty organization, endorse an academic boycott against Israeli institutions. ACTA spoke out strongly against the ASA’s action, condemning it as “a dangerous precedent” that “amounts to the dismantling of academic freedom in favor of political posturing....” And we were not alone: nearly 100 college and university presidents, as well as the AAUP and seven past presidents of the ASA, condemned the boycott.

Surprisingly, even students attempted to silence dissenting opinions in 2013. At Swarthmore College, a group of students proposed that the school divest from fossil fuel corporations and petitioned the board for an unprecedented open board meeting to discuss the idea. The board granted their request—but the students seeking divestment then marched into the board meeting, chanting slogans, shouting down students who disagreed

with them, and eventually shutting down the meeting. They chose headlines over reasoned debate.

ACTA immediately called upon Swarthmore’s trustees to take action. If student protesters were allowed to use force and intimidation to shout down competing voices, we argued, a dangerous precedent would be set. Citing our *Free to Teach, Free to Learn* guidebook, we urged the board to “acknowledge the right of all members of the Swarthmore community to participate in campus dialogue without fear of coercion.”

When students at Vassar College engaged in similar heckling and disruption to shut down dialogue about fossil fuel investment, ACTA was again there to help. We have provided advice and ongoing consultation to a group of Vassar students interested in protecting open debate.

SUPPORTING FREE ASSOCIATION

Regrettably, “political correctness police” abound on our college campuses. And fossil fuels are not the only target. So too is free association—especially association made possible through membership in fraternities and sororities. Freedom of association is under threat at Connecticut’s “little Ivy,” Trinity College. Instead of addressing skyrocketing tuition, a weak core curriculum, and a “party” reputation head on, the president has chosen to blame Trinity’s Greek letter organizations. The Trinity board passed a regulation mandating that all student organizations become co-ed, a move that would essentially end Greek life on campus.

Knowing that engaged alumni can work effectively to improve their alma maters, ACTA has joined **Concerned Alumni for a Better Trinity College** in the trenches. We have been in touch with the Concerned Alumni regularly and, in our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, we have prominently featured their struggle to protect the right of assembly and association. ■

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By BENNO SCHMIDT | July 30, 2013

Mitch Daniels's Gift to Academic Freedom

His skepticism about the merits of a sacrosanct liberal history textbook has sparked an overdue debate.

Most Americans would agree that academic freedom is a sacred right of the academy and crucial to the American experiment in democracy. But what is it really?

That's the question raised by the Associated Press's July 16 release of emails between Mitch Daniels, when he was the governor of Indiana, and his staff concerning Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States." The emails were written in 2010 and Mr. Daniels, whose second term as governor ended this January, is now president of Purdue University in Indiana.

Published in 1980, Zinn's "A People's History" (the author died in 2010 at age 87) has been a staple of Advanced Placement courses at the high-school level and omnipresent in college syllabi for decades. Praised by some for focusing on American history from the ground up, the book has been condemned by others as emblematic of the biased, left-leaning, tendentious and inaccurate drive that too often passes as definitive in American higher education.

Mr. Daniels falls squarely among the critics. Zinn's history, the then-governor wrote in February 2010, "is a truly execrable, anti-factual piece of disinformation that misstates American history on every page." Then Mr. Daniels asked: "Can someone assure me that it is not in use anywhere in Indiana? If it is, how do we get rid of it before any more young people are force-fed a totally false version of our history?"

Did Mr. Daniels—the future university president—violate academic freedom with his outburst? A July 22 open letter signed by 90 Purdue

professors suggested as much, saying the teachers were "troubled" by his actions, in particular by his continuing to criticize Zinn's book after taking over at the university.

Demanding retaliatory funding cuts or preventing college faculty from teaching or publishing certain ideas would have amounted to such a violation. It appears Mr. Daniels, either as governor or as Purdue president, did none of these. In his emails, he aired his unhappiness with Zinn's account of American history, but there is currently no evidence that anything was done by him or his staff to act upon his heated remarks.

Moreover, in a written response to the Purdue professors' letter, he explained that as governor he was only concerned about the teaching of Zinn's book in Indiana's K-12 schools, and that he is "passionately dedicated to the freest realm of inquiry possible at Purdue."

But what about his criticism? Do politicians or outside groups violate academic freedom when they criticize academics? Again, the answer is no.

Inquiries of this sort about teaching materials are not unusual in the life of a university president. Presidents take such inquiries seriously and follow up to make sure that the curriculum and materials are of the highest quality. Public scrutiny helps institutions fulfill their mission. It rightly keeps institutions on their toes.

Academic freedom is faculty's freedom to teach. But, more important, it is also students' freedom to learn. It is, as University of Wisconsin Prof. Donald Downs writes in the

American Council of Trustees and Alumni guidebook, "Free to Teach, Free to Learn": "the right to pursue the truth in scholarship and teaching, and to enjoy authority regarding such academic matters as the nature of the curriculum, [and] faculty governance." At the same time, it is "maintaining respect for the truth (which means avoiding bias in its various forms), exercising professional and fair judgment, and maintaining professional competence."

In other words: Academic freedom is a right and a responsibility. In recent times, the academy has too often been focused on rights and privileges rather than responsibility and accountability.

Mr. Daniels surely won't be the last politician hoping to do something in the face of frequent imbalance and bias in the academy. And it won't be the last time that faculty and others raise rightful concerns about inappropriate interference. That is why the recent email revelation offers not only Purdue, but the academic community at large, a long-overdue opportunity to undertake a robust self-examination of what academic freedom is—and isn't.

Politicians can't dictate course syllabi or reading lists in higher education. But nor should faculty be allowed to engage in indoctrination and professional irresponsibility without being held to account. And yet, over the past 50 years, that is essentially what has happened. The greatest threat to academic freedom today is not from outside the academy, but from within. Political correctness and "speech codes" that stifle debate are common on America's

EXCERPTS FROM FREE TO TEACH, FREE TO LEARN

Lawrence Summers

Charles W. Eliot University Professor and President Emeritus, Harvard University

"[T]he threat today is less from overreaching administrations and trustees than it is from prevailing faculty orthodoxies....When professors seek to use the university to advance their ideological agenda, administrators and trustees must respond vigorously."

Alan Charles Kors

Henry Charles Lea Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania; co-founder, The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

"Even at public institutions, ensuring the basic rights of a free society too often requires litigation and political action. Speech codes fall when students are courageous enough to challenge them (but typically only then)."

Donald Downs

Alexander Meiklejohn Professor of Political Science, Law, and Journalism, University of Wisconsin

"Academic freedom is a right because American society correctly assumed that it is necessary in order to attain an enlightened polity dedicated to truth and intellectual progress."

"ACTA's conference and trustee guide turn history on its head by helping and empowering trustees to ensure and protect academic freedom, as faculty and others undermine it."

Benno Schmidt, CUNY board chair and former president of Yale University, at ACTA's academic freedom conference

The Free to Teach, Free to Learn report was cited in a Wall Street Journal op-ed, calling on university leaders to undertake a needed campus-wide conversation about academic freedom and scholarly standards of integrity.



Professors Neil Hamilton of St. Thomas School of Law, Donald Downs of the University of Wisconsin, and Philip Hamburger of Columbia University Law School address ACTA's academic freedom conference.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

ACTA IN TIME MAGAZINE

What will college look like in 2025? That's what *TIME* asked in its October 7, 2013 cover story—and it turned to ACTA for the answer.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jon Meacham began his investigation of American higher ed by citing the findings of ACTA's 2012 GfK Roper American History Literacy Survey. Highlighting the shocking level of historical and civic illiteracy we discovered among college graduates, Meacham went on to discuss two issues high on ACTA's agenda: measuring student learning and strengthening core curricula.

As ACTA's vice president of policy, Michael Poliakoff, told *TIME*, "Higher education is facing a real crisis of effectiveness." That is why ACTA's pursuit of academic excellence is vitally important, and why it is so gratifying when our work receives the national attention it deserves.



VALUING LEARNING, NOT REPUTATION

These days, college rankings and ratings abound. From *U.S. News* to *Forbes* to *Washington Monthly*, a whole cottage industry exists to tell Americans which schools are worth their time and money. But too many of these rankings focus on measuring inputs rather than outputs. And none of them asks that most important of questions: What are students actually *learning*?

ACTA's **What Will They Learn?**[™] project is a different kind of college guide. Now in its fifth year, What Will They Learn?[™] grades 1,091 colleges and universities on the strength of their core curricula. For each school included, we identify whether students are required to complete courses in seven key subjects: Composition, Literature, intermediate-level Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Math, and Science. Schools receive a grade from "A" to "F" depending on how many subjects they require.

The results are alarming.

Instead of providing students with a broad-based liberal arts education, too many schools allow students to pick from a smorgasbord of niche courses on "hip" topics. 82% of schools do not require a basic survey course in U.S. History or Government, over 95% don't require a course in Economics, and over 40% don't require any college-level Math. Instead students take courses like "The Fame Monster: The Cultural Politics of Lady Gaga" and "The Sociology of the Living Dead: Zombie Films."

INFORMING PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND TRUSTEES

Most parents don't know what's happening on campus. And ACTA is trying to change that. For the first time, in 2013, What Will They Learn?[™] published the four-year graduation rates of each and every school we evaluated. For some years now, the Department of Education has used six-year grad rates as the default statistic for college and university performance—thus making the institutions appear more successful than they really are. We want to end

that. And what we found is shocking. Schools may promise a college degree in four years, but for countless students, that promise is a fantasy. **The average four-year graduation rate at schools surveyed is just 40%!**

We also collaborated with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education to publicize the state of free speech at the schools we evaluated. Alongside each school's What Will They Learn?[™] grade, we noted its FIRE "Stoplight" speech code rating. Nearly 64% of institutions

rated by FIRE in the study received a "Red Light" rating, indicating that the institution has at least one policy that "clearly and substantially" restricts freedom of speech.

Most importantly, we made sure that the presidents and boards of trustees at every What Will They Learn?[™] school know exactly where their schools stand. Every college and university president and board chair received a copy of the guide as well as a customized report comparing their institution to its peers. We also supplied every board member with a seven-point action plan for rebuilding a rigorous "college level" general education program.

ACTA has been studying the general education requirements at numerous colleges and universities for years and its What Will They Learn? report reveals that very few have curricular requirements that come close to ensuring that their students receive a solid general education.

Forbes, November 2013

ADVANCING THE CAUSE OF EXCELLENCE

More and more, people are turning to ACTA's What Will They Learn?[™] college guide as a way of assessing real educational value. In 2013, WhatWillTheyLearn.com had **over 63,000 unique visitors**—an increase of 44% over the previous year! Since the October 9, 2013 launch of our 2013–2014 ratings and release of our “College in Crisis” video, the site has had over 28,000 unique visitors.

With numbers like these, it's clear why YesCollege.com, a site dedicated to helping students and parents navigate the college application process, put What Will They Learn?[™] on its list of “101 Top Resources” for getting into college.

And you can be sure that ACTA's “A” schools are proud of having that seal of approval. The University of Dallas alumni magazine ran a feature story about its What Will They Learn?[™] “A,” and the University of Georgia's president celebrated UGA's “A” grade in his State of the University address. As Gardner-Webb Provost Dr. Ben Leslie remarked after his school earned an “A”: “It is greatly gratifying to receive this affirmation from an outside organization with the prestige of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.”

PRODUCING “A” SCHOOLS

Schools fought hard to earn ACTA “A's” in 2013. ACTA congratulates our three newest “A” schools: Southwest Baptist University, Clark Atlanta University, and Bluefield College.

Bluefield was so pleased by its “A” rating that it invited ACTA's Dr. Michael Poliakoff, who oversees What Will They Learn?[™], to address its convocation at the beginning of the school year, where he praised Bluefield for bucking the trend of declining standards.

Bluefield was able to earn its “A” because of an innovative partnership between ACTA and the Beazley Foundation in Virginia.

You see, the Beazley Foundation has taken ACTA's message to heart. Soon after the release of our 2012 report card on Virginia higher education, the Beazley Foundation (which has provided tens of millions of dollars to Virginia higher education) announced that it would “take a stand” against schools that failed to provide rigorous core curricula. It suspended funding for over two dozen Virginia colleges and universities assessed in the report. The Foundation has now made funding conditional on institutional performance, and it provides resources to schools seeking to augment core requirements.



In 2013, WhatWillTheyLearn.com had over 63,000 unique visitors—an increase of 44% over the previous year.

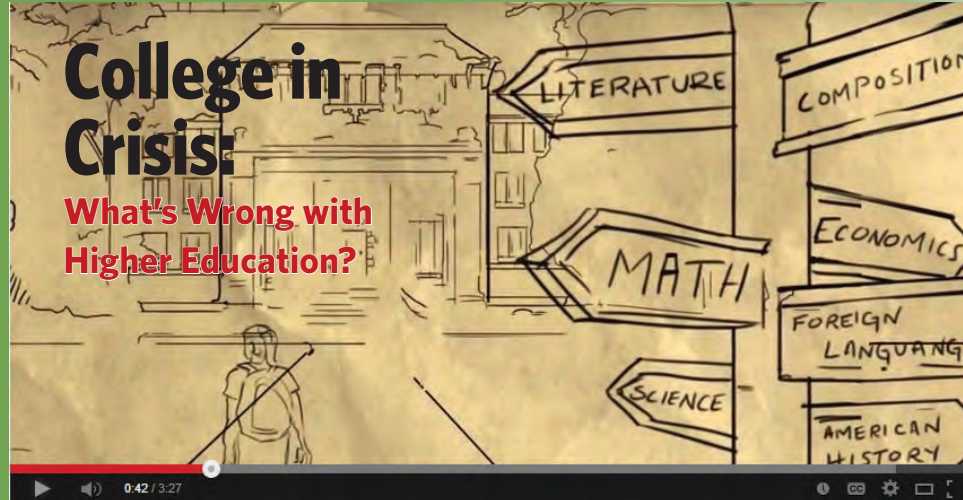
funding conditional on institutional performance, and it provides resources to schools seeking to augment core requirements.



Judge Richard Bray, chair of the Beazley Foundation; ACTA's Michael Poliakoff, and Bluefield president David Olive.

I continue to reflect on what a grand day we had yesterday.... Your announcement of the College receiving an A rating from ACTA, followed by your superb remarks during convocation, were truly a blessing to our campus community.”

David Olive, president, Bluefield College



Our new video summarizing the findings of What Will They Learn?™ 2013-2014 highlights the importance of a broad-based liberal arts education in the 21st-century economy. Students, parents, and employers understand the value of a truly well-rounded education—and colleges are starting to get onboard. Check out the video at WhatWillTheyLearn.com and on **ACTA's YouTube Channel, GoACTA.**

Kiplinger

By JANET BODNAR | December 2013

How to Grade Colleges

We give extra credit to schools that hold down debt and get kids out in four years

Beginning in 1999, *Kiplinger's* has published the best values in private colleges and universities. This year, our lists take on special significance. President Obama recently proposed tying federal financial aid to colleges' performance, based on a ratings system that would let students and families select schools that provide the best value. As soon as we heard about the President's speech, we unleashed a barrage of tweets and Facebook posts that said "We already do that!"

The President's proposed ratings would be based on affordability measures such as tuition, scholarships and student-loan debt, as well as graduation rates—all of which *Kiplinger's* considers. Our rankings start with academic quality, then heavily weight such factors as financial aid packages, excluding loans. And we give extra credit to schools that hold down debt and get kids out in four years.

We keep our data as objective as possible to give families an unbiased comparison. "We take our job seriously," says senior editor Jane Bennett Clark, who supervises our college coverage. Last year, Jane, when several colleges acknowledged that they had submitted false data, "we dropped them from the rankings."

Beyond the numbers, the President's proposal to measure college outcomes runs into a minefield. How do you measure success when families may have different ideas of what that means? A number of sources already make a stab at it, using various benchmarks. For example, the *Washington Monthly* ranks schools based on what the magazine considers public-interest criteria, such as how many students join the military or the Peace Corps. Some families may be interested in schools that emphasize a strong core curriculum, which you can find in a guide called "What Will They Learn?" compiled by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

Meanwhile, in its College Salary Report, PayScale lists the median earnings for alumni of more than 1,000 schools, as self-reported in surveys.

Parents and students may not have a specific salary in mind, but given the cost of college and the hazy labor market, they're at least concerned that graduates will be able to find a job. If that's your idea of a successful outcome, here's what I recommend: When you visit a school, don't just look at the dorms and the climbing wall. Head for the career center to find out how serious the school is about helping students land internships and jobs or apply to grad school. When staff writer Susannah Snider visited top-ranked Washington and Lee University, she was impressed that students were focused on getting practical experience, often with internships in nearby Washington, D.C.

And students should choose a major with an eye toward marketability. They don't have to major in such hot fields as computer engineering or nursing. But liberal arts majors should learn computer skills, and business and science majors should take classes in writing and public speaking. (See our lists of the Best College Majors for a Lucrative Career and the Worst College Majors for Your Career.)

By the numbers. When compiling any rankings, you're only as good as your data provider. This year, after W&L topped our list, it came to light that the school had measured the number of students admitted as a percentage of total applications, including those that were never completed. When incomplete applications were omitted, W&L's admission rate jumped a few percentage points. We double-checked our rankings using the new number, and W&L still came out on top, mainly because it had stepped up its need-based financial aid. As Jane observes, we take our job seriously.

Kiplinger recommended What Will They Learn?™ as a guide to schools with a strong core curriculum. And **YesCollege.com**, a site dedicated to helping students and parents navigate the college application process, put What Will They Learn?™ on its list of "Top Resources" for getting into college.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By DOUGLAS BELKIN | August 25, 2013

Are You Ready for the Post-College SAT?

Employers Say They Don't Trust Grade-Point Averages

Next spring, seniors at about 200 U.S. colleges will take a new test that could prove more important to their future than final exams: an SAT-like assessment that aims to cut through grade-point averages and judge students' real value to employers.

The test, called the Collegiate Learning Assessment, "provides an objective, benchmarked report card for critical thinking skills," said David Pate, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at St. John Fisher College, a small liberal-arts school near Rochester, N.Y. "The students will be able to use it to go out and market themselves."

The test is part of a movement to find new ways to assess the skills of graduates. Employers say grades can be misleading and that they have grown skeptical of college credentials.

"For too long, colleges and universities have said to the American public, to students and their parents, 'Trust us, we're professional. If we say that you're learning and we give you a diploma it means you're prepared,'" said Michael Poliakov, vice president of policy for the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. "But that's not true."

The new voluntary test, which the nonprofit behind it calls CLA+, represents the latest threat to the fraying monopoly that traditional four-year colleges have enjoyed in defining what it means to be well educated.

Even as students spend more on tuition—and take on increasing debt to pay for it—they are earning diplomas whose value is harder to calculate. Studies show that grade-point averages, or GPAs, have been rising steadily for decades, but employers feel many new graduates aren't prepared for the workforce.

Meanwhile, more students are taking inexpensive classes such as Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs, but have no way to earn a meaningful academic credential from them.

HNTB Corp., a national architectural firm with 3,600 employees, sees value in new tools such as the CLA+.

said Michael Sweeney, a senior vice president. Even students with top grades from good schools may not "be able to write well or make an argument," he said. "I think at some point everybody has been fooled by good grades or a good resume."

The new test "has the potential to be a very powerful tool for employers," said Renald Gidwitz, a board member of the Council for Aid to Education, the group behind the test, and a retired chief executive of Helene Curtis, a Chicago-based hair-care company that was bought by Unilever in 1996.

Only one in four employers think that two- and four-year colleges are doing a good job preparing students for the global economy, according to a 2010 survey conducted for the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Meanwhile, GPAs have been on the rise. A 2012 study looking at the grades of 1.5 million students from 200 four-year U.S. colleges and universities found that the percentage of A's given by teachers nearly tripled between 1940 and 2008. A college diploma is now more a mark "of social class than an indicator of academic accomplishment," said Stuart Rojstaczer, a former Duke University geophysics professor and co-author of the study.

Employers such as General Mills Inc. and Procter & Gamble Co. long have used their own job-applicant assessments. At some companies such as Google Inc., GPAs carry less weight than they once did because they have been shown to have little correlation with job success, said a Google spokeswoman.

At Teach for America, which recruits college students to teach in rural and urban school districts, the GPA is one of just dozens of things used to winnow nearly 60,000 applicants for 5,900 positions. Candidates who make it to the second step of the process are given an in-house exam that assesses higher-order thinking, said Sean Waldheim, vice president of admissions at the group. "We've found that our own problem-solving

Are They Learning?

A College Trustee's Guide to Assessing Academic Effectiveness



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI
Institute for Effective Governance

THE ART of College Admissions

A Trustee Guide to the Value of Entrance Exams



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI
Institute for Effective Governance

ACTA's Michael Poliakov was interviewed widely on the value of the Council for Aid to Education's CLA+ exam and was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Fiscal Times*, and featured on *Wall Street Journal Live*.

In 2013, ACTA mailed over 15,000 trustees our guides on the importance of using assessments to measure student learning, and the value of entrance exams for college admissions.

Bluefield was able to attain an “A” when a Beazley Foundation grant made it possible to hire an economics professor for the general education program. Meanwhile, other schools are collaborating with ACTA and the Beazley Foundation to plan curricular improvements supported by Foundation grants.

Employers, parents, students, and philanthropists are getting the message: It’s time to change the incentives in American higher education to focus on academic excellence. ACTA’s partnership with the Beazley Foundation is a model of how philanthropists can work to bring important change to our colleges and universities. A revolution for higher standards is happening!

ENSURING HIGHER LEARNING

The evidence is in: too many colleges charge a fortune, but for countless students provide little value. Recent studies have shown that one-half of students surveyed made no learning gains in two years and over a third of them showed no progress in four years!

That is why it is so important to measure student learning. And that is why ACTA has been a tireless advocate of nationally-normed metrics of student learning, which would put colleges’ claims about educating students to the test. When the Council for Aid to Education released its new CLA+

exam, ACTA’s Michael Poliakoff was quick to praise it as a valuable tool for employers to “determine whether a potential hire is ready for the challenges of a dynamic workplace.” Poliakoff was interviewed widely on the issue and was quoted in the *Fiscal Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. He even sat down for an interview with *Wall Street Journal Live* to explain the importance of nationally-normed learning assessments in an age of grade inflation and offered feedback to the Council on Aid to Education as it endeavored to improve its assessment tools.

In 2013, ACTA also mailed over 15,000 trustees our new guides on the importance of learning assessments, and the value of entrance exams for college admissions. *Are They Learning?* encourages trustees to measure student performance in order to strengthen educational quality, and introduces trustees to three objective, nationally-normed tests that assess student learning in college. *The Art of College Admissions* pushes back against the “test-optional” movement, which argues that schools should not require standardized tests such as the SAT in admissions. ACTA’s guide identifies important information that standardized tests can provide and urges trustees to be cautious before they sign on to test-optional policies. Both guides equip trustees with the information that will help them set metrics-driven policies. ■

ACCOUNTABILITY

SETTING A HIGHER BAR FOR QUALITY

Accreditation began as a well-intended quality assurance system designed to ensure that veterans attending college under the G.I. Bill received a quality education on the taxpayer's dime. Now, regional accreditors have near monopoly power to regulate which schools receive over \$150 billion in taxpayer funds—and they too often abuse that power. They interfere with independent governance, and allow hard-earned tax dollars to flow to schools with weak curricula, exorbitant costs, and abysmal graduation rates. As Congress begins to consider the reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, there's an opportunity for reform!

ACTA was one of the first voices calling for reform of America's broken college accreditation system with *Can College Accreditation Live Up to Its Promise?* in 2003, and *Why Accreditation Doesn't Work and What Policymakers Can Do About It* in



PROTECTING STUDENTS AND TAXPAYERS

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S FAILED
REGULATORY APPROACH AND
STEPS FOR REFORM

HANK BROWN

SEPTEMBER 2013

CENTER ON HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM
AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

2007. After years of tireless advocacy, we have now been joined by a chorus of allies. As support for accreditation reform continues to grow, ACTA remains at the very center of the debate.

Offering a Path Forward

In September of 2013, ACTA partnered with the American Enterprise Institute's Center on Higher Education Reform to release *Protecting Students and Taxpayers: The Federal Government's Failed Regulatory Approach and Steps for Reform*. This white paper, authored by the head



Hank Brown, Judith Eaton, Arthur Rothkopf, and Amy Laitinen discuss accreditation reform.

of ACTA's Accreditation Reform Initiative, former U.S. Senator Hank Brown, lays out the numerous failings of today's accreditation system and offers several reform proposals. The Senator unveiled the proposal as part of a panel, sponsored by ACTA and AEI, where he engaged in a lively discussion on the future of accreditation with Arthur Rothkopf, former president of Lafayette College; Amy Laitinen, deputy director, Education Policy Program of the New America Foundation; and Judith Eaton, president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

ACTA also delivered a hard-hitting new trustee guide on the topic, *Accreditation: A Call to Action for College Trustees*, providing trustees with specific action items they can use to fight accretor overreach and pave the way for a better system in the future.

Taking the Fight to Capitol Hill

With the Higher Education Opportunity Act soon up for renewal, ACTA regularly communicates to legislators and policymakers on Capitol Hill the urgent need for accreditation reform.

In June, ACTA president Anne Neal testified before the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training about the failure of accreditors to ensure academic quality and effectiveness. She told Congress how accreditation acts as a barrier to innovation and interferes with institutional autonomy. Questions from both sides of the aisle indicated a true interest in reform.

In lieu of our current broken system, Neal recommended that legislators consider de-linking federal student aid from traditional accreditation. She also proposed requiring colleges to provide the public with independently-certified data on key outcome measures like loan default rates and job placement success.

ACTA allies Senator Hank Brown and Arthur Rothkopf delivered the same message to congressional staff when they were invited to speak at a conference of the New America Foundation.

Getting the Attention of the White House

Even President Obama added his voice to these efforts. In supplemental materials to his State of the Union address, he called for new benchmarks of affordability and student outcomes and suggested establishing a new, alternative system based on performance and results. Some media reports arguably credited ACTA for influencing the President's interest in

accreditation reform. We also added key caveats to the Administration's plan to build a federal college rating system. At a forum convened by the Department of Education, ACTA testified against a new federal regulatory system and urged the department instead to condition federal aid upon transparent, independently-audited data of student success.

President Obama's embrace of accreditation reform shows that what was once a fringe issue is finally taking center stage. Thanks to ACTA's work, a bipartisan coalition is coming together to shake up the higher ed status quo.

Fighting Accreditor Overreach

Of course, not everyone has gotten the message. That's why ACTA also took the fight right to the accreditors' doorsteps. On the eve of 2013, ACTA filed a complaint with the Department of Education against the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). SACS had overstepped its authority when it placed the University of Virginia "on warning" for the board's alleged failure to inform faculty of its plan to fire UVA's president. This naked power grab by SACS was a blatant intrusion into the governance authority granted to the Board of Visitors by the Commonwealth of Virginia. When ACTA's complaint was rebuffed, we appealed directly to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

While SACS escaped federal sanction, their actions gained the attention of the *Wall Street Journal*, which published an op-ed by Senator Hank Brown calling SACS out for its overreach. Trustees of other universities and two Virginia governors also raised concerns about the accreditor's actions.

SACS made another power play when its representatives descended on UVA in September for a three-day closed-door visit—and ACTA was ready to call them out again. ACTA penned an article highlighting the hypocrisy of SACS's calls for transparency.

ACTA is holding accrediting agencies accountable for their actions and laying the groundwork for a new era of transparency and accountability in higher education.

Reaching Out to Governors

Governors appoint trustees and play a key role in shaping the future of public higher education in their states. In communications with the Republican Governors Association and National Governors Association, ACTA demonstrated how accreditation policies interfere with state authority, and encouraged the governors to inform their state's congressional delegations about the

[ACTA's] strong case that accreditation as we know it requires radical reformation would galvanize continued attention to a subject once "rarely discussed." ACTA raised important questions, and its voice would be heard again.

Paul L. Gaston in his new book, *Higher Education Accreditation: How It's Changing, Why It Must*

need for fundamental reform.

ACTA also delivered our updated guide to governors, *Leading the Charge*, which provides governors and their key staff with specific action steps about the selection of trustees of public universities and the need for trustees to have staff and resources independent of the colleges they steward.

DEMANDING AFFORDABILITY

The cost of higher education is too high, and ACTA is working hard to save millions in taxpayer and family dollars by ensuring that colleges do more with less, rather than simply raising tuitions.

Accreditation

A Call to Action for COLLEGE TRUSTEES



By ALLIE BIDWELL | September 30, 2013

Report: Congress Should Reform College Accreditation to Save Students, Taxpayers

A new report says college accreditation needs to be overhauled to protect students and taxpayers.

As Congress embarks on its mission to reauthorize the law that governs the flow of federal financial aid dollars, some education experts say the government has been ineffective in ensuring the quality of the nation's colleges and universities.

In a paper released Monday, Hank Brown, a former U.S. congressman, senator and president of the University of Colorado, writes that the nation's accreditation system is a "public policy and regulatory failure by almost any measure." And as Congress begins the process to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, which outlines the role of accrediting agencies, Brown argues that lawmakers should consider reforms ranging from expanding the number of accrediting agencies to separating an institution's eligibility for federal funding from the accreditation process.

"A reformed system would help protect students and their families from the devastating consequences of uninformed investment in educational services that will have no return except years of staggering debt," Brown writes. "The dream of American higher education—high academic standards and broad, affordable access—depends on making these prudent changes to our system of quality assurance."

Brown, who now serves as head of the Accreditation Reform Initiative at the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, writes that the accrediting agencies have failed because some of their primary roles conflict. Accrediting agencies help guide the improvement of institutions through peer evaluation but also serve as the "gatekeepers" for the Department of Education because they determine which institutions are eligible for federal funding. If an institution is not recognized by an accrediting agency, students cannot use federal financial aid there.

"The rationale was to ensure that students attended quality institutions from which they were likely to graduate and be employable, thereby safeguarding students and ensuring taxpayer dollars were well spent," Brown writes.

A conflict of interest arises, Brown writes, because the agencies are funded and staffed by the institutions they are tasked with monitoring. While this structure was meant to foster a process of peer review and self-improvement, it is complicated by the fact that accrediting agencies largely control access to federal funding, which the majority of institutions rely on to stay afloat.

Under this mindset, Brown argues, accrediting agencies also sometimes undermine the autonomy

The Washington Post

By JENNA JOHNSON | March 12, 2013

Dept. of Education says U-Va. accreditor did not break federal laws by placing school 'on warning'

U.S. Department of Education officials announced last month that the University of Virginia's accrediting agency did not break any federal laws when it placed the public institution "on warning" for violations related to the U-Va. governing board ousting and then reinstating the university's president in June.

The decision was in response to a complaint filed by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, an activist group that has pushed college governing boards across the country to assert more control over their institutions. The group, known as ACTA, appealed the decision last week.

ACTA officials have publicly supported the U-Va. Board of Visitors' actions last summer and applauded the reappointment and confirmation of board leader Helen E. Dragas, writing in a statement: "Bravo, legislature, governor and trustees!"

The group has also long been critical of accrediting agencies, which operate regionally or nationally to ensure colleges and universities meet what federal officials refer to as "acceptable levels of quality." In most cases, schools must be accredited to receive federal funding. ACTA officials have asserted that accreditation is an "expensive, counterproductive system" that needs to have higher standards, especially for graduation rates and education quality.

Late last year, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) placed U-Va. "on warning" for violating compliance standards related to faculty involvement in governance and governance requirements, including one that forbids a minority of board members controlling the board. An investigative team is scheduled to visit the university in Charlottesville later this year.

On Dec. 31, ACTA President Anne D. Neal filed a complaint against SACS-COC with the Department of Education, saying that the actions taken against U-Va. fell "outside the accreditor's legitimate authority and constitute a blatant intrusion into governance powers."

(Neal's daughter, Alexandra Petri, works for The Post's editorial department.)
Acting Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education David A. Bergeron responded to the complaint in a letter dated Feb. 11, according to a copy provided to The Post by ACTA. In the letter, Bergeron wrote that accrediting agencies are "private, voluntary membership organizations" and the department is "expressly barred from dictating agency accrediting standards." Bergeron noted that the department has not received any complaints from U-Va. or its accrediting body.

"In sum, we believe we understand, and we respect, your views as to the important roles of boards of trustees in governance and oversight," Bergeron wrote. "[H]owever, we have concluded that no violation of federal law has occurred."

On Friday, ACTA appealed to Education Secretary Arne Duncan and asked him to reverse the determination. Neal wrote in a letter to Duncan dated March 8 that accrediting agencies are undermining the independence of colleges and universities.

"Accreditors' interference in institutional governance may be common," Neal wrote, "but it is also wrong and should end."

SACS-COC President Belle S. Wheelan said in an e-mail on Wednesday morning that it would be premature for her to comment, given the appeal. Spokespeople at U-Va. and the Department of Education also declined to comment.

ACCREDITATION IN THE NEWS: Accreditation reform is no longer a fringe issue. This year, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* have run countless stories on the issue. But interest isn't confined to the higher ed press. *U.S. News & World Report* and the *Wall Street Journal* covered calls by U.S. Senator Hank Brown for accreditation reform, and the *Washington Examiner* called for de-linking federal aid and accreditation in an editorial. *USA Today* also joined the pack, running an article on the controversy sparked by President Obama's accreditation proposals, and the *Washington Post* covered ACTA's complaint against the SACS accrediting agency. Thanks to the tireless efforts of ACTA and like-minded reformers, accreditation reform is the talk of the town!

ACTA released its hard-hitting trustee guide, **Accreditation: A Call to Action for College Trustees**, and ACTA president Anne D. Neal testified on Capitol Hill on the failure of accreditors to ensure academic quality and effectiveness.



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALI
Institute for Effective Governance



AP Associated Press

By MARC LEVY | August 3, 2013
In chancellor search, Pa. chips away public input

It used to be that the names of the finalists for the highest-paid job in Pennsylvania state government—chancellor of the State System of Higher Education—were made public.

Not anymore. In the coming days, the board of the 14-university system is expected to announce its pick for the next chancellor after keeping the names of three finalists a secret.

Such secrecy is said to be an emerging trend in searches for executives in higher education as would-be candidates might fear reprisal if their current employer found out that they were job hunting.

So, on Jan. 11, the state system's board member met and voted unanimously to make the entire search process confidential. The search is supposed to bar contact with a candidate's current employer to ensure that confidentiality—except, it seems, in the case of one candidate.

One of the board members voting for that policy was Gov. Tom Corbett's then-secretary of education, Ronald Tomalis, who also apparently is a finalist in a process in which Corbett has substantial input.

Since the Patriot-News of Harrisburg first reported it July 25, citing people speaking anonymously, nobody—not Tomalis, Corbett or state system officials—has disputed it. Tomalis on Friday turned down requests from the Associated Press to discuss it.

Tomalis' last day as Corbett's education secretary was May 31. By law, the secretary of education sits on the state system's board. At the time, Tomalis turned down interviews to explain why he was leaving

the post, but he kept the nearly \$150,000-a-year salary to take a newly created post as an adviser on higher education issues to Corbett, a Republican.

If Tomalis is hired as chancellor, it would represent a departure from the first three chancellors of the 31-year-old state system. All three—James McCormick, Judith Hample and John Cavanaugh—had a background in university administration and a doctoral degree.

Tomalis, 51, has a bachelor's degree and no background in higher education, but for much of the last 18 years he has held top-level positions in both the federal and state Departments of Education.

Pennsylvania state system, with about 115,000 students, is the nation's 13th-largest public university system. The previous chancellor, Cavanaugh, left in February. At the time his salary was \$327,500.

A spokesman for the state system, Kenn Marshall, said Friday that he expects the selection to be made at a yet-to-be-announced public meeting, perhaps in the next two weeks.

Auditor General Eugene DePasquale, a Democrat, is among those calling for the names of the finalists to be made public before then.

So far, the search committee has shared the secret of who the finalists are among the 17 state system board members. The members include four state lawmakers, Corbett, his new education secretary and 11 gubernatorial appointments, including five who were last appointed by Corbett's Democratic predecessor, Ed Rendell.

In addition to Corbett and the trustees, others were offered the opportunity in late July to meet

with the three finalists: leaders of the unions that represent university employees, university presidents, representatives of state system university trustee councils and a handful of business and community leaders, Marshall said.

Marshall said he was unable to immediately identify them, but one person contacted by the Associated Press was Dr. Marshall said. Marshall said he was unable to immediately identify them, but one person contacted by the Associated Press was Dr. Marshall said.

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The New York Times

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA | March 15, 2013
University of Virginia's Crisis Reflects Wider Conflict

Nine months after the University of Virginia removed its president, prompting a storm of protest and then reinstated her, the university still cannot go more than a few days or weeks without some new reminder of that spectacle, or persisting tensions between the president and the trustees who ousted her.

But the dispute long ago stopped being just about Virginia. Conflict over governing the university has become a proxy war in a much larger struggle over control of the nation's public universities, with educational groups weighing in on opposing sides of the Virginia confrontation, and taking shots at each other.

Around the country, waning state support, rising tuition and the competitive threat of online education have raised fears about the future of public universities. Trustees and politicians in several states have increasingly flexed their muscles to influence university operations, leading to turf battles with presidents and chancellors who are largely used to having their way.

"In any sector that's in the middle of stress and change, the relationships between C.E.O.s and their boards get more complicated, and these are very stressful times to be running a university," said M. Peter McPherson, president of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, who has held several high-level posts in business, government and academia, including president of Michigan State University and chairman of Dow Jones & Company.

He said board members who are executives in their own right are tempted, especially in challenging times, to shift from overseeing to hands-on managing.

Last June, President Teresa A. Sullivan agreed to resign from the helm at Virginia, after being told

that otherwise, the Board of Visitors would fire her. The news stunned nearly everyone at the university, including Dr. Sullivan. There had been no public sign of discontent with her, and the board's chief, or rector, Helen E. Dragas, had orchestrated the ouster in private conversations with other members.

The reasons Ms. Dragas, a real estate developer, offered for removing Dr. Sullivan touched on philosophical differences, leadership qualities and a failure to embrace new technology, but they struck many people as vague. A series of mounting protests by faculty members, students and alumni ensued, the board reversed course, and Dr. Sullivan stayed on. Gov. Bob McDonnell had demanded that the board end the crisis, but he ensured some continuing awkwardness by reappointing Ms. Dragas.

People who watch them at close quarters say that these days, the relationship between Dr. Sullivan and Ms. Dragas is a bit prickly but mostly cordial, and that generally the president and the board have worked well together toward goals like greater openness, a faculty pay raise and long-range planning. Ms. Dragas and Dr. Sullivan declined to comment.

"There are still some concerns, but it's not a crisis, and I think things have gotten a lot better," said George Cohen, chairman of the Faculty Senate, in a report on last year's crisis. The authors "met with person after person, vainly striving for some explanation for the board's action and the process it had followed," the report said.

Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, said the problems that the University of Virginia faces, and the questions over who is in charge, are national phenomena. The traditional approach for trustees and governors, which he advocates, is "noses in hands off," he said, but that view is under fire.

The University of Texas regents, often seen as an extension of Gov. Rick Perry, who appointed them, have strongly asserted themselves in recent years, leading to repeated

embarrassment. One that drew ample news coverage, but probably not a serious setback for the university.

Weeks later, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni—which had lobbied the Virginia board during the confrontation and says that in general, trustees should be much more activist—countered by asking the United States Department of Education to investigate the accrediting commission, accusing it of meddling in internal university affairs. The department turned down the request.

Two weeks ago, The Washington Post published an e-mail that Dr. Sullivan sent last month to board members, contending that the detailed goals laid out for her by Ms. Dragas were unrealistic or micromanaging, suggesting a new flare-up. Last week, the trustees' council made a new appeal to the Department of Education to look into the accrediting commission.

And on Thursday, the American Association of University Professors had harsh words for the Virginia board, in a report on last year's crisis. The authors "met with person after person, vainly striving for some explanation for the board's action and the process it had followed," the report said.

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Florida Rising

An Assessment of Public Universities in the Sunshine State

American Council of Trustees and Alumni
with The James Madison Institute



"We are consistently striving to improve our state's university system, and reports like ACTA's provide an important perspective in comparison with other nationwide benchmarks."

Frank Brogan, chancellor
State University System of Florida

The **Associated Press** interviewed Michael Poliakoff on ACTA's views regarding the chancellor search at Penn State, and the **New York Times** cited ACTA in its article on the larger implications of UVA's governance struggles for public universities across the country.

Rick Scott 45th Governor of Florida

June 7, 2013

Governor Scott: Report highlights importance of holding the line on tuition

Today, Governor Rick Scott made the following statement on the joint American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) and James Madison Institute's (JMI) report on the Florida's State University System. In its report, *Florida Rising: An Assessment of Public Universities in the Sunshine State* available here, ACTA and JMI provide critical statistics on the impact rising tuition has on Florida's families.

Governor Scott said, "Higher education in Florida should be affordable so it is accessible to as many Florida families as possible. The increase in tuition and fees have demanded an increasing percentage of Florida's household income and saddled many Florida graduates

with tens of thousands of dollars in debt. I strongly agree with the final report recommendation calling for the university system to continue to hold the line on tuition. I will also continue to veto any tuition increase proposed by the Florida legislature."

The reports notes Florida's high potential to be a model for other states. "Florida has a favorable position as a national leader in low tuition and fees; this advantage for its citizens deserves to be maintained. University boards of trustees should continue to restrain the growth in tuition and fees in order to provide good value for college students," the report states.

Governor Rick Scott praises
ACTA's report **Florida Rising:
An Assessment of Public
Universities in the Sunshine
State.**

Working in the States

After the June 2013 release of ACTA's report, *Florida Rising: An Assessment of Public Universities in the Sunshine State*, the governor praised the report's recommendation to "hold the line on tuition." The Florida Board of Governors invited ACTA to present our findings and then-chairman of the board Dean Colson pledged to address all 11 recommendations. The report was discussed up and down the state, and cited in the *Gainesville Sun*, *Tampa Bay Times*, *Orlando Sentinel*, and other major Florida media outlets. Incoming board chair Morteza Hosseini referred to *Florida Rising* in his State of the System address, confirming the board's continued focus on implementing ACTA's recommendations.

Working closely with ACTA, **William & Mary's** alumni association, The Society for the College, raised concerns about a proposal that would weaken the core curriculum and increase administrative costs. ACTA drafted talking points for the Society's chairman, who then met with the chairman of the William & Mary Board of Visitors. ACTA's op-eds in local papers vigorously advocated affordable, quality education, and public accountability.

Our 2012 report *Best Laid Plans: The Unfulfilled Promise of Public Higher Education in California* continues to have an impact through ongoing conversations with the nonpartisan California Legislative Analyst's Office and with the higher education staffs for both the California House and Senate. After ACTA's op-ed in the *Orange County Register* called out UC administrators for racking up huge travel bills, UCLA issued a new policy designed to limit expenditures in the future.

[S]ome of the most trenchant comments concerning the restructuring of the Penn State Board came from the Washington-based organization known as the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, which has established itself as a major conscience of the operation and functioning of . . . Boards of Trustees.

Editorial Board , Connecticut Law Tribune

In **Indiana**, the Commissioner for Higher Education announced limits on tuition and rolled out institutional performance metrics in her State of Higher Education address, in line with ACTA recommendations. ACTA friend and new Purdue president Mitch Daniels announced a freeze on tuition now entering its third year.

Following ACTA's 2011 state report *Made in Maine*, trustees froze tuition at the University of Maine in 2012—and did it again in 2013. After ACTA addressed **Ohio** public trustees in late 2012, Ohio State University and Bowling Green University trustees announced tuition freezes in 2013.

In all, at least 34 private four-year colleges with total undergraduate enrollment over 60,000 and 24 public colleges with total undergraduate enrollment over 320,000 froze tuition for 2013–2014!

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

In 2013, ACTA found itself at the center of a growing national debate over governance as higher ed constituencies searched for active, engaged leadership.

Our national influence was clearly on display in late 2013 when Pennsylvania state senator John Yudichak, citing ACTA and following our recommendations solicited by Pennsylvania's Auditor General, introduced legislation to reform Penn State's governing board by shrinking its size. For some time, ACTA has criticized the large, inefficient board structure, and Louis Freeh's Report on the 2012 Penn State scandal confirmed that power rested largely with president Graham Spanier—with little independent oversight.

Pennsylvania is just one of many places in which ACTA is demanding **governance for a new era**. ACTA shows how boards—which hold plenary authority over their institutions—can be empowered and motivated to ensure active informed governance that responds to the needs of the state and the long-term needs of graduates.



Guido Pichini, board chair of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, and Lisa Curran, Peirce College trustee, participate in the ACTA-Aspen trustee seminar, one of three held in 2013.

American higher education has been the finest in the world; but a rapidly changing landscape threatens that primacy unless those legally responsible—the governing boards—do their job. Presidents of public universities once proudly defended the institutions’ role of providing their states with an educated citizenry, and providing young people with a chance to move up. Alas, many public university presidents appear to have abandoned this special mission, to advocate instead for what amounts to privatization of public universities. Last year president Teresa Sullivan at UVA appointed a Public University Working Group, which called for a “new contract between the University and the Commonwealth of Virginia”—essentially a call for privatization. Tuitions

would be raised to private-university levels on the promise that in-state students will have access to increased financial aid. Proposals introduced in the legislature would, in the meantime, reduce the governor’s authority to appoint trustees to the Board of Visitors and, instead, give alumni the power to assign trustee seats to alumni, students, and faculty groups. ACTA editorialized against both trends, urging trustees instead to “keep public institutions public”—to defend public institutions’ unique mission of readying a state’s young people for a lifetime of learning, work, and active citizenship.

In Texas, ACTA took to the pages of the *Houston Chronicle* to defend Wallace Hall, a University of Texas trustee who faced impeachment proceedings. Hall has been outspoken in his attempts to obtain information about the university’s activities and has filed numerous public records requests. Some people, at least, are coming around: two months after ACTA’s op-ed, a University of Texas lawyer called the charges against Hall “absurd.”

Educating Trustees

In 2013, ACTA introduced three new trustee guides and supported boards on issues ranging from strategic planning to academic freedom. ACTA is the go-to resource for active, engaged trustees who want to make a difference.

Customized training is a centerpiece of ACTA’s support for trustees, and this year we continued our partnership with The Aspen Institute to host trustee seminars emphasizing quality, cost, accountability, and excellence in governance. At meetings in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, we welcomed trustees from a wide range of institutions, including Middlebury College, Hamilton College, Temple University, Johns Hopkins, Wellesley, and the University System of New Hampshire. ACTA’s unique trustee seminars pair classic writers such as Plato, Tacitus, and Jefferson with contemporary pieces on the challenges facing higher education. Trustees returned to their institutions with tools for success and an expanded network of reform-minded trustees.

Advising Boards

ACTA has not been afraid to dig into details in support of energetic board governance at public universities.

In 2013, the **University of North Carolina** Board of Governors adopted a new five-year strategic plan, using ACTA's trustee resources. The new plan calls for conscious strategic planning, "review and refinement" of the academic mission, and careful resource allocation to help meet the challenges posed by a difficult economic environment. It represents exactly the kind of engaged board leadership universities need.

ACTA raised issues of board oversight, then stepped in to help Hawaii trustees right the ship. In December 2012 an ACTA op-ed criticized the **University of Hawaii** Board of Regents for failing to maintain proper oversight over university dealings as well as the university's top administration for cutting the board out of the decision-making loop. In this case, poor decision-making by administrators led to the university losing \$200,000. In 2013 the university's president resigned. ACTA has advised the board to conduct a vigorous search that does not relinquish responsibility to a search firm and has consulted on other key decisions including budgeting, university planning, and a proposed study of the institution's executive compensation structure.

At the **University of Maryland**, regent and former congressman Tom McMillen has been a champion for accountability and an articulate spokesman for trustee oversight of athletics—an issue ACTA has championed for years. In recent months, we've offered independent information on athletic oversight, open meetings, executive sessions, and dashboard metrics.

STANDING UP FOR DONORS

Higher education relies on donors not just for money, but for accountability: active, engaged donors ensure that their gifts are used to enhance academic excellence. That is why ACTA stands up for those fighting to protect donor intent.

In 2013, ACTA came to the aid of the Banks-Newell family. In 1989, Elizabeth Beall Banks sold her 138-acre farm to Johns Hopkins university for \$5 million—one-tenth its market value, an in-kind donation of \$45 million.

Ms. Banks was a fierce opponent of urban sprawl, and the terms of the contract stipulated that the property would be used for low-density educational purposes. But after Ms. Banks's death, Johns Hopkins announced plans for a massive commercial development, three times as large as the one Ms. Banks agreed to. Feeling betrayed, Ms. Banks's relatives sued. ACTA came to their aid with an op-ed in the *Baltimore Sun*, which slammed Johns

Hopkins and other universities that disregard donor intent.

We also fought for donor intent at the Sage Colleges in New York, where the Louis and Hortense Rubin Community Fellows Fund fosters partnerships between college and university faculty and local community service agencies. When the Sage administration envisioned using that money for other purposes, the children of the original donors fought back. ACTA wrote to the trustees in support of the Rubins' challenge and spoke with the president and other institutional leaders at their behest. ■

Mr. Newell and the family deserve our praise for demanding accountability and fighting the arrogant expectations—too often displayed by those in the academy—that donors should hand over dollars, no questions asked.

Anne D. Neal, *Baltimore Sun*, October 16, 2013

GETTING THE WORD OUT

MAKING HEADLINES

ACTA's role as a national leader in higher education was reflected in widespread media coverage. In 2013, ACTA appeared in print media with a total circulation of over **35 million** including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and many other media outlets.

TIME's October cover gave ACTA particular prominence. The story led with ACTA's research on historical illiteracy among college graduates, quoted vice president Michael Poliakoff, and highlighted two of ACTA's key reform proposals: measuring student learning and strengthening the core curriculum.

This year we supplemented our traditional media outreach with new social media efforts. The number of people who "like" our Facebook page more than doubled in 2013, and we are using Facebook to project our message to thousands of users at a time. Visits to our website, GoACTA.org, are up 22% over last year, and visits to WhatWillTheyLearn.com are up

In 2013, ACTA appeared
in print media with a
total circulation of over
35 million.

nearly 32%. We've also moved into Twitter in a big way and picked up many new Twitter followers—including one U.S. Senator!

REACHING THE HIGHER ED COMMUNITY

Trustees. Our trustee network includes trustees at virtually all of the 1,245 four-year institutions that offer a four-year liberal arts degree. In total, our network encompasses more than 15,000 trustees at over 1,100 institutions.

Alumni. Nearly 13,000 alumni receive our quarterly *Inside Academe* and over 3,000 receive our eNewsletters and email updates packed with action steps. ACTA also partners with other organizations and, in 2013, held our first “online town hall”—with nearly 1,700 participants—about how alumni can press for reform. We are a chief resource for alumni-donors and for reform-minded alumni groups.

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”

Below are highlights from 2013.

Seminars and Conferences

- ACTA partners with The Aspen Institute and HBE Foundation to host seminar for Pennsylvania trustees.
- ACTA co-hosts “Alumni to the Rescue” online town hall for concerned college alumni.
- ACTA hosts “Free to Teach, Free to Learn” conference on academic freedom at the Union League in New York City.
- ACTA partners with The Aspen Institute to host “Envisioning the Future of Higher Education” seminar for trustees in Chicago.

- ACTA and the American Enterprise Institute co-sponsor a panel entitled “A Higher Bar for Higher Ed: Reforming Accreditation for the 21st Century.”
- ACTA partners with The Aspen Institute to host a trustee seminar at the Harvard Faculty Club in Cambridge, MA.
- Anne Neal attends meetings of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity in June and December.
- Anne Neal joins host committee for the Frankel Fiduciary Prize awarded to Robert A.G. Monks.



Participants engage with academic freedom experts at ACTA’s “Free to Teach, Free to Learn” conference in New York City.

Presentations and Testimony

- ACTA challenges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools over its intrusion into governance at the University of Virginia.
- Anne Neal meets with Florida Board of Governors head Dean Colson and discusses higher education with other Florida trustees.
- Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill participates in “Higher Education Marketplace” strategy session at annual Heritage Resource Bank meeting in Florida.

- ACTA presents at NAS 25th Anniversary Conference in New York City.
- Anne Neal discusses “Emergent Orders in Higher Education: Reconsidering the Idea of a University” at Indianapolis conference.
- Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill participates in Heritage Foundation Webinar on “Disruptive Innovation in Higher Education.”
- Michael Poliakoff presents on “The Future of Higher Education Reform: Enabling Access Affordability, and Excellence” at panel sponsored by ACTA, NAS, and the English Speaking Union.
- Anne Neal addresses Middle States Commission on Higher Education standards-setting body on accreditation standards in Philadelphia.
- Michael Poliakoff presents *Florida Rising*, ACTA’s report on public higher education in Florida, to the Florida State University System Board of Governors.
- Anne Neal testifies on Capitol Hill before the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training in favor of accreditation reform.
- Michael Poliakoff delivers convocation address at Virginia’s Bluefield College, one of ACTA’s newest “A” schools.
- Anne Neal speaks at Indiana’s Ball State University on “Honoring George Washington’s Legacy: Do Americans Need a Reminder?”
- Anne Neal meets with Purdue president Mitch Daniels to discuss higher education and accreditation reform.
- Anne Neal attends AEI Higher Education working group at Stanford University.
- Michael Poliakoff gives testimony at U.S. Department of Education forum at George Mason University on “Making College More Affordable.”
- Armand Alacbay addresses “Dare to Think” education summit in Florida on “Losing our Collective Memory.”
- Anne Neal visits National Governors’ Association, meets with executive director Dan Crippen, and submits memo on accreditation and interference in higher education governance.
- Michael Poliakoff appears on accreditation panel held by the staff of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. Senator Hank Brown and Arthur Rothkopf also address congressional staff.
- ACTA contributes to Standards-Setting Panel for the CLA+ in New York City.
- ACTA participates in an invitation-only luncheon to celebrate the launch of a Purdue University-Gallup partnership to measure the workforce readiness of graduates.

ATHENA ROUNDTABLE

What will higher education look like in ten years? And how can we shape it for the better? Those are the questions trustees, educators, policymakers, and alumni leaders asked when they gathered at the new library at George Washington’s Mount Vernon for ACTA’s 2013 ATHENA Roundtable.

The Roundtable attracted experts from across academia, including Columbia’s Roosevelt Montas and Philip Hamburger, the University of Pennsylvania’s Alan Charles Kors, University System of Florida chairman Dean Colson, former congressman and current University of Maryland regent Tom McMillen, former University of Virginia rector Helen Dragas, former senator Hank Brown, and many other higher-education luminaries. Addressing the largest ATHENA gathering ever, our speakers spoke out on key challenges facing colleges and universities—and articulated solutions.

Participants discussed a wide range of topics. On the side of practical policy details, the New America Foundation’s Kevin Carey, former Lafayette College president Arthur Rothkopf, and Senator Brown called for reform of America’s broken higher education accreditation system. By



Burck Smith, Roosevelt Montas, Norm Augustine and Michael Poliakoff



Dean Colson



Alan Charles Kors and Philip Hamburger



Rick O'Donnell



Rubenstein Leadership Hall, The National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon



Allan Greenberg



Helen Dragas and Tom McMillen



Charles Barzun



Kevin Carey, Arthur Rothkopf and Hank Brown



“Thoughts on Teaching and the Importance of Understanding History”

By Gary W. Gallagher

Remarks accepting

**The Philip Merrill Award
for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education**

with

Tributes from

John L. Nau III
Melvyn P. Leffler
Susan Welch
Thomas M. Rollins

November 8, 2013
Washington, DC

ALL EDUCATION IS EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

At ACTA's 2013 ATHENA Roundtable, **Roosevelt Montas, Director of the Center for the Core Curriculum at Columbia University**, spoke about the relationship between education and citizenship. Below are excerpts from his eloquent presentation.

[W]e have slowly come to realize that democratic citizenship is not only a question of rights. The legal scaffold of rights and liberties we enjoy is only the beginning of citizenship. Having the legal rights of citizenship is not enough. For these rights to mean something, for these rights to carry social force, we need to educate individuals that understand themselves as having the rights to have rights; individuals who understand themselves as having the standing and the duty to participate in shaping our collective destiny; and individuals who have the tools to make informed political judgments. ...

In the Core Curriculum, we expose students to the rigorous study of classical texts—to Socrates, to Hobbes, to Rousseau, to Jefferson. By studying and discussing these texts, students hone a sense of their own political voice, they develop confidence in their own capacity to think about the big questions, to reason and engage with the great thinkers of the Western political tradition. The fundamental work we are doing is that of preparing these students for the life of citizenship; preparing them for the life of freedom.

“It takes an act of will to make this subject boring.”

So said Professor Gary Gallagher of the Civil War as he accepted ACTA's 9th annual Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. The remarks were distributed to our supporters and are available on line.



Anne Neal with Merrill Award recipient Gary Gallagher, John Nau III and Gary's son Will.

contrast, Columbia’s professor Montas offered a philosophical paean to the importance of a core curriculum and argued that “all education is education for citizenship.”

2013 PHILIP MERRILL AWARD

“It takes an act of will to make this subject boring,” Professor Gary Gallagher said of the Civil War as he accepted ACTA’s ninth annual Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education.

Gallagher is the John L. Nau III Professor in the History of the American Civil War at the University of Virginia and one of America’s leading experts on our bloodiest conflict. A beloved undergraduate teacher, Gallagher has also educated thousands of adults through his many books and his top-rated lectures for *The Teaching Company*. In addition, he is notable for his work on behalf of America’s battlefields as the founder and first president of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites.

After dinner at Anderson House, home of The Society for the Cincinnati, the nation’s oldest patriotic association, Gallagher’s friends and colleagues paid tribute to his many accomplishments. Fellow academics Susan Welch of Penn State and Melvyn Laffler of UVA praised Gallagher’s teaching and

scholarship; Laffler said that “[Gallagher] has demonstrated that serious scholars can attract a huge following...from a public wanting to grasp how values and principles have shaped personal identity, national memory, and public policy.” Business leader John L. Nau III, who endowed Gallagher’s chair in Civil War history at UVA because there was no such course when he was a student there, spoke about Gallagher’s unforgettable battlefield tours, which he offers not only to students but to colleagues and parents as well.

And Teaching Company founder and 2012 Merrill Award winner Tom Rollins shared stories about Gallagher’s taped lectures—some of the best the company has ever produced.

The Merrill Award is the only prize of its kind that singularly supports and honors those who advance a rich liberal arts education and the teaching of American history and the Western tradition. Today, U.S. history requirements are sadly disappearing from many

history departments. A recent book co-authored by ACTA friend professor Donald Downs found that half of the leading history departments do not employ even a single faculty member who specializes in traditional military history. In times like this, we were particularly honored to offer the Merrill Award to one of America’s great military historians. ■

I began my company with an ideal in mind—that there are great professors and teachers for whom the distance from average is a quantum leap....I spent decades of my life looking for them, and for me and thousands of our customers, Gary Gallagher is an idea come true.

Tom Rollins, founder of The Teaching Company and
2012 Merrill Award recipient

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ACTA Says Goodbye to Longtime Board Member

ACTA congratulates Lee Goodman, one of our longest serving and most dedicated board members, on his recent appointment to the Federal Election Commission! Mr. Goodman has worked with ACTA since he served on the Virginia governor's staff over a decade ago. He joined our board in 2004 and has played a big part in bringing ACTA's ideas into the mainstream of higher education policy.

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ACTA working for you: Anne D. Neal, Michael Poliakoff, Jacquie Pfeffer Merrill, Lauri Kempson, Erica Mason, Greg Lewin, Avi Snyder, Tom Sanford, Daniel Burnett, William Gonch, and Armand Alacbay.

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 its 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

William Cook
Distinguished Teaching Professor of History, SUNY–Geneseo

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George R. Lucas, Jr., *Class of 1984 Distinguished Chair in Ethics, Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership, US Naval Academy; Professor of Ethics and Public Policy, Graduate School of Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School.*

Joyce Lee Malcolm, *Professor of Law, George Mason University; 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*



ACTA's summer interns discuss America's Founding with Ambassador Michael Novak.

FELLOWS & INTERNS

ACTA's internships attract some of the brightest college students and recent graduates in the country. Our summer interns perform indispensable research on the What Will They Learn?™ project as well as other key research and writing tasks. They also participate in ACTA's intellectual culture through our summer speaker series, which invites eminent scholars and experts to

address our interns on important topics in higher education. This year's guests included author and former ambassador Michael Novak, *The New Atlantis* editor Adam Keiper, and ACTA's own board chairman, Dr. Robert Lewit.

DONORS & DONOR SOCIETIES

ACTA is able to maintain our prized intellectual independence because we receive no money from universities or the federal government: all of our support comes from generous donors like you. And this year our donors broke all previous records! Donations to ACTA surpassed \$2 million for the first time ever, allowing us to take on new staff and inaugurate many of the initiatives you read about in this report.

Our supporters' strong commitment to education reform has been manifest across our donor societies, every one of which has grown in 2013. At the end of 2012 there were 95 members of ACTA donor societies; at the end of 2013 there are 122 members.

Getting to Know Higher Ed

ACTA donor society members enjoy access to exclusive events at which they can meet important scholars and education-reform leaders in an intimate setting. In February of 2013, ACTA donors gathered at the Sulgrave Club in Washington, DC to meet famed historian and ACTA friend Dr. Wilfred McClay. Professor McClay, now a professor at the University of Oklahoma, gave a talk that articulated the distinctiveness of the university experience and urged its defense.

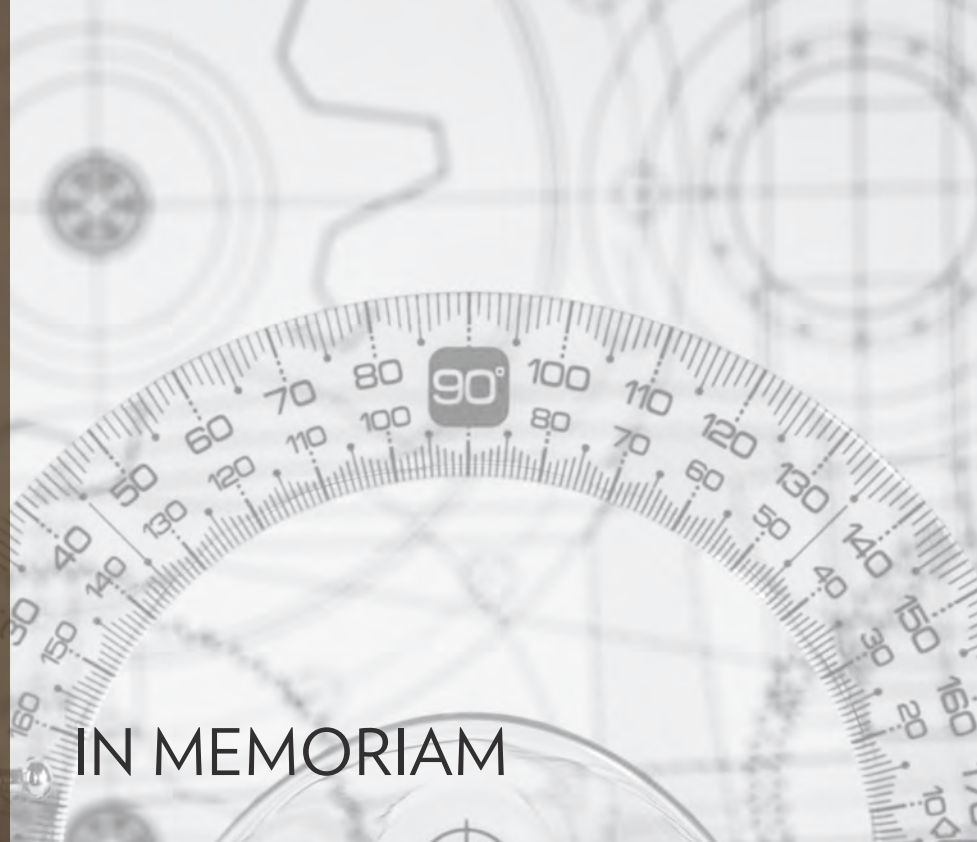
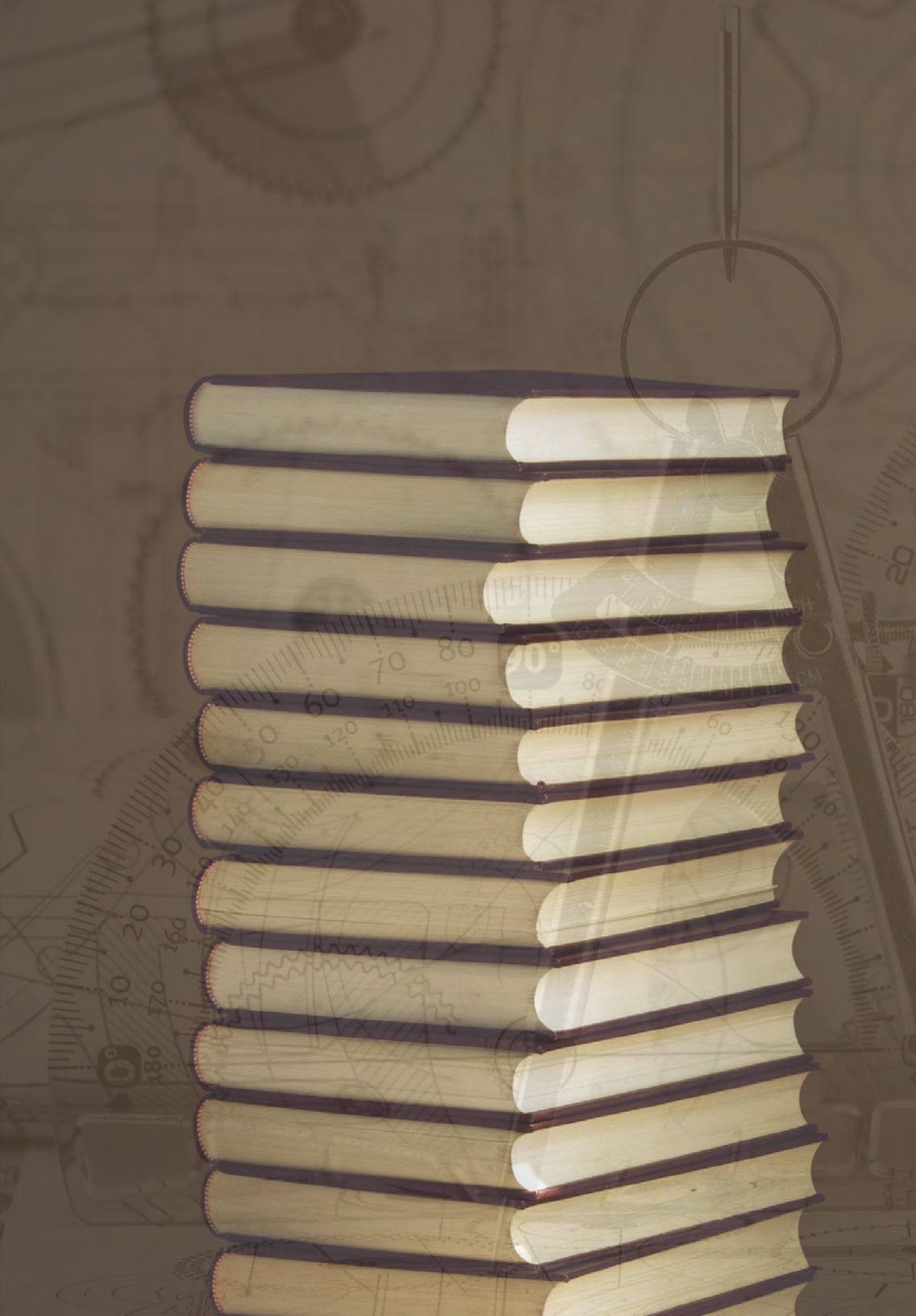
In March, ACTA supporters gathered at the Colony Club in New York City for an evening dinner discussion of higher education challenges and how ACTA is taking positive steps to address them. In July, supporters met distinguished author and journalist Michael Barone for a dinner discussion of the "higher ed bubble" at a private residence in Washington, DC. And

in October, a small group of ACTA supporters had dinner with Jeffrey J. Selingo, editor at large at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Dinners and gatherings such as these are a small way for us to give back to those who have done so much, not only for ACTA, but for American higher education. If you would like to learn more about joining one of ACTA's donor societies, give us a call!



Professor Wilfred McClay and Thomas Rollins at ACTA donor event.



IN MEMORIAM

EMORY WILLIAMS, JR.

ACTA has long emphasized the important role of engaged and thoughtful alumni. Long-time ACTA friend, Emory Williams, surely personified this truth. Mr. Williams attended Emory University in the 1920s and '30s. However, his relationship with the university continued long after his graduation. He began serving as a trustee of the university in 1964, endowed a major teaching award—the Emory Williams Award—in the 1970s, and was elected trustee emeritus in 1981. Mr. Williams, who served as Chief Financial Officer of Sears, Roebuck & Co. and head of Sears Bank & Trust, also supported the development of a humanities-oriented core curriculum and a Liberal Arts lecture series for undergraduates. He epitomized the intelligent donor, adamant in educating himself about how his donations could best serve Emory's students, and he was no stranger to personally giving faculty a call or to sitting in on classes.

In pursuit of quality education, Mr. Williams chose a range of programs and organizations. We are immensely honored that ACTA was one of them.



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