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April 25, 2017

Dear Trustee:

The disruption at Claremont McKenna College (CMC) of a presentation by invited speaker Heather MacDonald, an author and Manhattan Institute scholar, has raised concerns about protections of academic freedom and freedom of expression at the College. This is a difficult time for the distinguished college that you serve, and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, which has worked for more than 20 years to protect academic freedom, is ready to help and advise in any way you deem appropriate.

CMC did well last year in adopting the Chicago Principles of free expression. It is urgently important now to apply them to signal to the college community that freedom of expression is a core value that the College will strenuously protect.

We urge the Board to ensure that Claremont McKenna's administration vigorously enforces existing policies imposing sanctions for disruptions that violate its community values. CMC's Student Code of Conduct prohibits "[a]ctions which disturb or disrupt the personal safety, peace or well-being of the community . . . or which disturb or disrupt the normal functions of the College," as well as those which cause injury or intimidation "regardless of whether the intimidation included any physical violence." The actions of recent protesters on CMC's campus—who, by their own admission, included CMC students—clearly violate these standards.

Future violators must be deterred by the recognition that acts obstructing free expression will be met with severe sanctions. The Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at Yale led by C. Vann Woodward emphasized, too, that this is the responsibility of the administration: "Every official of the university . . . has a special obligation to foster free expression and to ensure that it is not obstructed."

Thank you for your service to higher education. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.  
President

cc: Hiram E. Chodosh, president, Claremont McKenna College

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