

In This Issue...

2 In Box

ACTA "A": U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

3 ACTA in the News

ACTA's New Report Sparks a National Conversation

4 Heard on Campus

5 Academic Renewal

New Programs Named to ACTA's Oases of Excellence Initiative

Alexander Hamilton Institute Visits ACTA

6 Speaking Up

Oberlin Veers Off Track

Meet ACTA's Summer Interns

7 Interview with History

Advocate David Bruce Smith

In Memoriam

8 ACTA Expands Higher Ed

Now Podcast

ACTA Releases *No U.S. History?* Report

Over the past decade, ACTA has repeatedly called attention to the troubling pattern of historical and civic illiteracy among U.S. college graduates. In surveys commissioned by ACTA, less than 20% of respondents could correctly identify—in a multiple-choice survey—the effect of the Emancipation Proclamation. Little more than half could identify the purpose of the *Federalist Papers*. Only 23% could pick James Madison as the Father of the Constitution.

American colleges and universities are failing their students. As ACTA's signature *What Will They Learn?* report found, only 18% require students to take even one course in U.S. history or government.

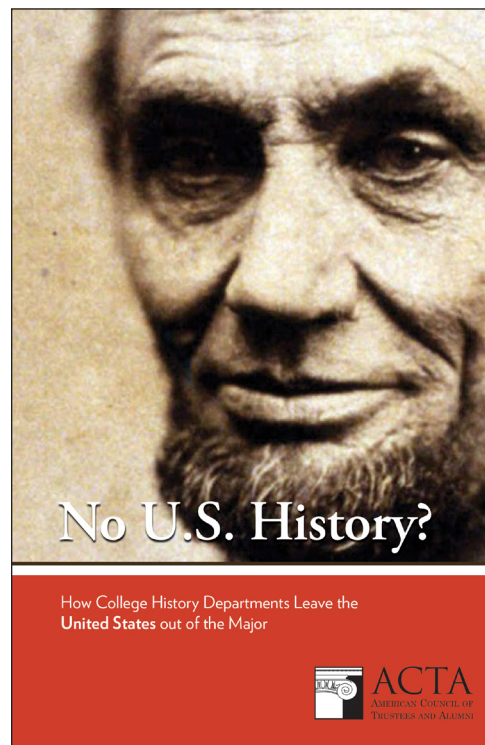
Released in July 2016, ACTA's newest study—*No U.S. History? How College History Departments Leave the United States*

out of the Major—shows how this illiteracy extends even further than previously thought.

Despite colleges' purported commitment to the noble ambition of training graduates "to be responsible and active participants in civic life" or "citizen-leaders for our society," American history has disappeared not only from many schools' general education curricula, but also from the requirements for history majors at far too many colleges and universities. As *No U.S. History?* details, 2/3 of the nation's "top" colleges and universities fail to require students pursuing a degree in history to take a single course in American history, though they

often mandate that students learn about areas outside the United States. Just four of the "top" 25 national universities require a U.S. history course of their history majors.

Even schools that maintain a U.S. history



(continued on 3)

Register NOW for ATHENA 2016!

www.GoACTA.org

info@GoACTA.org

1-888-ALUMNI-8

Join ACTA on **October 28th** for our annual ATHENA Roundtable Conference. Morning discussions by top scholars on higher education, academic freedom, and civic responsibility will be followed by the presentation of the 2016 Philip Merrill Award to Professor Niall Ferguson and Ayaan Hirsi Ali at an evening gala dinner. See the enclosed invitation. Register now at GoACTA.org/events/ATHENA or call 202.467.6787.

John O. Hunter, Past President
Alfred State College and College of Lake County
Hornell, NY

“I have just had the opportunity to digest the . . . *Temperate Radicals* [annual] report: Again, I am thrilled by the really important work that ACTA continues to perform. Every page is a reflection of *leadership excellence!* I . . . have sent it along to some colleagues and former students who have been losing hope. The broad compass of reform work is a reminder of the academic excellence we committed to years ago in pursuit of that ancient Athenian ideal for students ‘to strive for full exercise of creative powers along lines of excellence in a life affording scope.’”

Neil K. Bortz
Cincinnati, OH

“As you may be aware, I have been a supporter of ACTA for quite a number of years now. . . . ACTA has opened my eyes to what we are and are not teaching our children and to the unbelievable pivot our colleges and universities have taken away from core curricula. The current curriculum is clearly designed for the immediate gratification generation.”

Alice Brown, Past President
Appalachian College Association
Burlington, NC

“I was surprised and pleased to read about ACTA in a recent edition of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Experience as a trustee for a small college in New Hampshire and with several small nonprofit organizations has given me numerous opportunities to see how contentedly uninformed and easily swayed trustees at such organizations can be. . . . I am truly pleased to learn that your organization is committed to alerting the leaders in higher education to the dangers of believing

what they are told without any confirming evidence. You have achieved a wonderful goal in building ACTA to keep presidents and others in charge of our colleges and universities alert to the realities that can destroy them.”

Robert P. George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ

“I was very honored to receive the Merrill Prize [in 2005] and I’m just delighted to be associated as a prize winner with ACTA, because of the important work ACTA does for academic values—for the values of sincere, objective, dispassionate, honest truth-seeking, and those values are in jeopardy today. So much of the academy is occupied with ideology. Propaganda is replacing scholarship. Indoctrination is replacing teaching, and it seems to be getting worse rather than better. But we have to fight against it with all our might. We need flourishing institutions of higher learning in this society. It’s crucial to have them. We need to restore liberal arts learning ideals, and that’s why I’m so pleased that ACTA exists and is doing such heroic work to fight for those ideals.”

Editor’s Note: The above quote is an excerpt from Professor George’s July 2016 appearance on ACTA’s Higher Ed Now podcast.

Clyde Hunt, Jr.
Greensboro, North Carolina

“Excuse the soapbox, but I’m very concerned about the future of our once great and benevolent country. When I read about not only what was, but is being taught our young people, it frightens me. Hopefully, organizations like ACTA can change the flow, turn the tide, [and] right our floundering ship of state and academia before it’s too late.”

ACTA “A”: U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

ACTA is delighted to announce that the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York, will be the 25th “A” school in the forthcoming 2016-17 *What Will They Learn?* report.

In order to earn an “A,” a university’s general education program must require at least six of the seven courses ACTA deems necessary for a foundational undergraduate education. These are composition, literature, intermediate-level foreign language, U.S. history or government, economics, mathematics, and natural science. The Merchant Marine Academy’s “A” grade is indicative of an admirable pattern of strong general education programs in the nation’s service academies.

Of the over 1,100 institutions the report examines, only 2% can claim to have the honor of an ACTA “A,” but four of the five U.S. service academies now can. “The excellent curriculum at the Merchant Marine Academy is yet another indication of the value the U.S. service academies place upon a robust liberal arts education. Colleges and universities should take note: A rigorous general education program is essential, not only for our country’s future military leaders, but also for its future civilian leaders, in order for a free society to flourish,” said Eric Bledsoe, ACTA’s director of curricular improvement and academic outreach. ●



ACTA's New Report Sparks a National Conversation

Since the release of *No U.S. History? How College History Departments Leave the United States out of the Major*, media outlets across the country have covered its findings. To read the full articles, please visit GoACTA.org. Below are highlights of the coverage.

“Harvard University does not require history majors to take a course in U.S. history. Nor do Georgetown University, the University of Maryland and many other highly regarded schools. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni says that’s a problem.”
—*Washington Post*

“History majors at top colleges don’t know much about U.S. history—or at least they don’t have to. A new report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, a nonprofit group that advocates for accountability at schools, found that just 23 of the institutions among the 76 deemed to be the “best” by *U.S. News & World Report’s* 2016 rankings require his-

tory majors to take at least one U.S. history course.”
—*Wall Street Journal*

“At many top universities in this country, students wishing to obtain a history major aren’t required to study U.S. history. You read that right. . . . This news is distressing, although perhaps not surprising given the many head-scratching stories that emanate from college campuses today.”
—*The Oklahoman*

“According to a study by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, a nonprofit academic watchdog . . . half of the 23 schools with a U.S. history requirement have lax standards for fulfilling

it. The University of Connecticut, for instance, accepts ‘Hip-Hop, Politics, and Youth Culture in America,’ while University of Virginia history majors can count ‘Uncovering Early UVA’ toward their degree.”
—*Fortune*

“In a week of discouraging words, some of the most discouraging came from a report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni . . . According to the papers, researchers with that group found that just 23 of the [76] ‘best’ colleges require history majors to take United States history classes.”

—*Arkansas Democrat Gazette*

No U.S. History? Report, *continued from 1*

requirement frequently allow students to fulfill the requirement with remarkably narrow niche courses, such as “History of Sexualities” or “History of the FBI.” Lost in this sea of the overspecialized are the broader lessons of the Constitution, the Founding, and other key elements of our own nation’s development.

America’s past is being passed over. ACTA’s President Michael Poliakoff explained the implications of these findings: “Historical illiteracy is the inevitable consequence of lax college requirements, and that ignorance leads to civic disempowerment. A democratic republic cannot thrive without well-informed citizens and leaders.”

Since July, the release of *No U.S. History?* has attracted significant media attention and jump-started an important national conversation about educational quality and civic education. The report has been featured in the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, and *Fox & Friends*, among other news outlets.

Fortunately, curricular self-examination and reform can be done at little or no financial cost. *No U.S. History?* outlines a few of the ways in which stakeholders can take action and advocate for change. Trustees and administrators should insist that departments articulate with far greater clarity what students should know, and in reviewing history programs specifically, they should not hesitate to question and challenge the departmental rationale for what it does and does not require

of majors. Trustees can insist upon a requirement for every undergraduate, but especially for history majors, to study the history of the United States

and its institutions. Alumni and donors can create incentives for colleges and universities to improve core requirements, directing their funding towards an increased commitment to American history and government.

Good academic governance prioritizes the needs of students to have a meaningful and coherent curriculum, and that means including a substantive course in U.S. history. Administrators and professors cannot simply assume that their students have even an elementary grasp of key moments in United States history in the absence of a requirement for its study.

By adopting ACTA’s recommendations, colleges and universities can imbue their curricula with the substance underlying their mission statements, arming students—future citizens and citizen-leaders—with the knowledge they need about their country’s past. ●

Visit GoACTA.org to order or download ACTA’s new report.

No U.S. History?

How College History Departments Leave the United States out of the Major



University of California Increases In-State Enrollment

In March, a state audit of the University of California revealed that the university system, in search of increased revenue, had given preference to out-of-state and foreign students, who pay higher tuition rates. In response, the California legislature moved to link state funding for the university system to higher in-state enrollment rates, and the University of California announced in July that it had increased its in-state admissions offers for fall 2016 by more than 15%.

Giving preference to out-of-state students is a subtle way of masking an ongoing thirst for higher tuition, a burden on students that often results from rising administrative costs. In February, the chancellor for the University of California–Berkeley, the system’s biggest offender, warned of a “substantial and growing deficit,” caused in part by a 70% increase in administrative costs over five years. A Berkeley administrator previously noted, approvingly, that the increase in out-of-state students would add \$60 million each year in additional funds.

Ultimately, the University of California

system cannot fulfill its obligations to the taxpayers of California on the backs of students, in-state or out-of-state. To ensure the long-term stability of its campuses, administrative reform is an imperative.

Yale Handles Art Controversy Hastily

Three months after the Yale Corporation decided to keep the name of Calhoun College, Corey Menafee, a worker in a Yale College dining hall, smashed a stained glass window portraying slaves carrying bales of cotton. Shortly afterwards, he issued an apology for his actions and resigned from the university. In response, the Yale University Committee on Art in Public Spaces recommended that the window, along with several others, “be removed from Calhoun, conserved for future study and a possible contextual exhibition, and replaced temporarily with tinted glass.” Additionally, the university has obligingly rehired Mr. Menafee.

The window indeed depicts a shameful episode in American history. But by winking at vandalism, Yale sends a dangerous message that law-breaking and destruction are easily forgiven. There is no limit to the list of historical and cultural

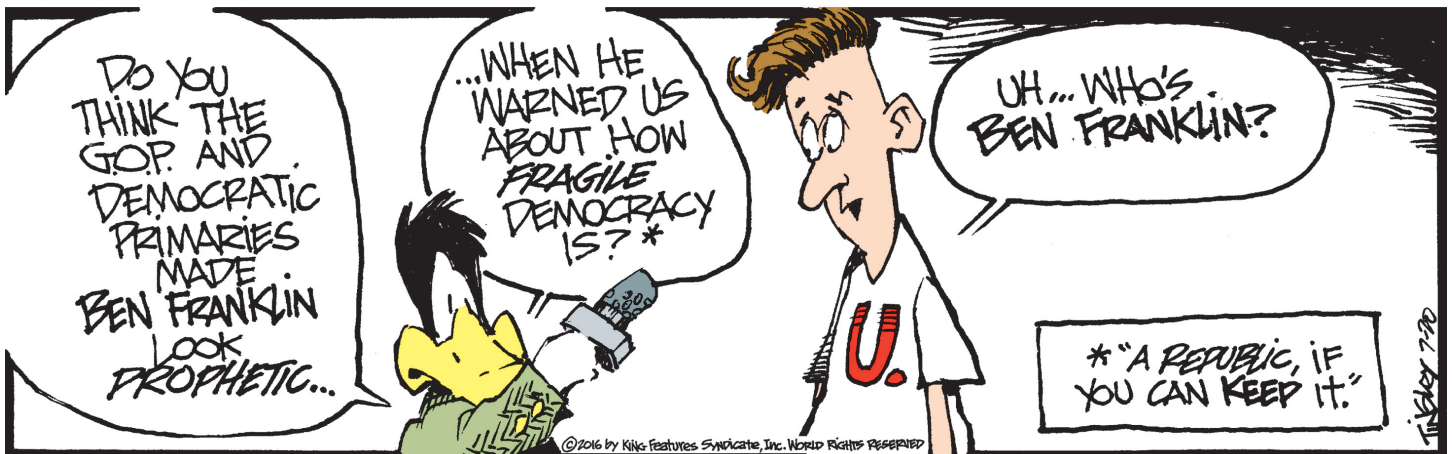
artifacts such an attitude puts at risk.

UNC, Cleveland State Encourage On-time Graduation

ACTA has long called upon schools to cut costs for students, and some seem to be listening. In July, the state of North Carolina passed a budget that froze undergraduate tuition for all students in the UNC system who graduate on their scheduled time frame—typically four years. The budget also increased transparency for prospective students, substantially reduced tuition costs for others, and encouraged schools to spend within their means.

North Carolina’s move is part of a nationwide effort to incentivize students to graduate on time, as 60% of students stretch their undergraduate careers into a fifth or sixth year. Some institutions, such as Cleveland State University, have begun charging the same rate for 18 credits as for 12, providing flexibility while encouraging students to register for appropriate course loads. As Cleveland State President Ronald Berkman explained, “The most effective way to lower student debt is to lessen the time toward completion.” Thank you, President Berkman. ●

Mallard Fillmore



Mallard Fillmore used with the permission of Bruce Tinsley, King Features Syndicate and the Cartoonist Group. All rights reserved.



New Programs Named to ACTA's Oases of Excellence Initiative

ACTA is pleased to announce four new additions to its Oases of Excellence initiative. The Georgetown Institute for the Study of Markets and Ethics at Georgetown University, the Institute for Freedom and Community at St. Olaf College, Students Who Enjoy Economic Thinking at the University of Alaska–Fairbanks, and the Center for the Philosophy of Freedom at the University of Arizona are the programs most recently added to a group now numbering 59. The Oases are individual programs located at universities across the country that promote the study of subjects such as American history, Western Civilization, political theory, economics, capitalism, leadership, and the Great Books.

The mission of the **Georgetown Institute for the Study of Markets and Ethics** is “to advance understanding of the ethical issues inherent in the functioning of the market society.” It is directed by Georgetown’s John Hasnas, a professor of law and business. This fall, the institute will host a symposium on “the effect of remote consequences—the unseen—on ethical decision making” as it pertains to “health and morals.”

St. Olaf College’s Institute for Freedom and Community seeks “to challenge presuppositions, question easy answers, and foster constructive dialogue among those with differing values and contending points of view” in its mission of encouraging “free inquiry and meaningful debate of important political and social issues.” In October, the institute will host

a panel entitled “‘Who’s in Your Wallet?’ Hamilton, Jackson, Tubman, and the Presidential Election” which will explore policy and social issues often associated with the three respective figures. Edmund Santurri, a professor of religion and philosophy at St. Olaf College, will direct the institute in the 2016-17 year.

Students Who Enjoy Economic Thinking (SWEET) is “a community and student organization that strives to educate the public on free market economic principles and their real life application through interactive discussions, forums, and special events.” Led by Sherri Wall, an economics instructor at the University of Alaska–Fairbanks, SWEET members meet weekly to discuss readings in economics and publish their findings in the prolific “Scholars blog.”

The mission of the **Center for the Philosophy of Freedom at the University of Arizona** is “to promote the understanding and appreciation of the ideals of freedom and responsibility along four dimensions: published research, undergraduate education, graduate education, and community outreach.” Each year the center holds two conferences. The next Social Philosophy and Policy conference will be held in December. Professor David Schmitz, the founding director of the University of Arizona’s program, said that he is “honored for [the] Center to be on [ACTA’s] extremely impressive list of Oases.” ●

Alexander Hamilton Institute Visits ACTA

This summer, the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization (AHI), an Oasis of Excellence, cohosted a presentation with ACTA for its Washington Program on National Security (WAPoNS). The program seeks “to prepare promising and motivated college students for the challenges of a rapidly changing global environment by offering them an opportunity to engage with some of the best thinkers, practitioners, and both current and former officials in the Intelligence Community, Congress, the Pentagon, the White House, non-governmental organizations, industry, and academia, including the premier think-tanks and news organizations.”

The institute is directed by AHI senior fellow Dr. Juliana Pilon and brings approximately 20 students to Washington, DC for two weeks to meet with leaders in national security and hold in-depth discussions of core readings. ACTA’s President Michael Poliakoff gave a presentation to the students on the interdependence of a free society and higher education that values civic engagement entitled “Students, Citizens, and Leaders: Our Nation’s Future.” We were honored to have Robert Paquette, AHI’s Charter Fellow, with us. He led a lively and informative question and answer session on the importance of liberal arts educations for students interested in careers in national security. ●



Robert Paquette discusses national security with AHI students at ACTA.

In a year of tumultuous student protests, events at Oberlin College undermine the consideration of serious concerns. Over the course of the year, groups of students assembled variously to protest the inauthenticity of the school’s cafeteria food, petition for the elimination of midterms and grades lower than a “C,” and present the school’s board and president with a list of 50 “nonnegotiable demands”—one of which was the implementation of an \$8.20 per hour activism wage. The students claimed that the school “functions on the premises of imperialism, white supremacy, capitalism, ableism, and a cissexist heteropatriarchy.”

Their demands have troubling implications. As Oberlin Professor Roger Copeland, whose own History of the Western Theatre course has come under scrutiny, observed, the expedient administrative response of caving to student demands about coursework and campus life forces professors to teach beyond their areas of expertise. The result is a twofold blow to academic excellence. Not only are the core texts of Western Civilization further neglected, but new courses are taught at subpar levels.

Perhaps if Oberlin followed ACTA’s recommendations for a stronger core curriculum, particularly by adopting an intermediate-level foreign language requirement, students would turn to more substantive considerations. By learning a language, they could receive a far more meaningful multicultural experience than debates about whether the imperfections of cafeteria food constitute cultural appropriation. ●

Meet ACTA’s Summer Interns

This summer, ACTA benefitted from the newest additions to our team—a cohort of interns, hard at work researching for the What Will They Learn?™ project. **Emily Reynolds** hails from Fort Myers, Florida; she is a senior at Florida Gulf Coast University, where she majors in economics and serves as the volunteer regional director of Students for Liberty.

A junior at Ashland University, **Nathaniel Urban** majors in health and risk communications, and public relations and strategic communications. He is a native of Willoughby, Ohio, and works for the university’s Office of Public Relations.

Intern **Abby Staysa** is a recent graduate of Hiram College and a participant in the Hertog Foundation’s programming. In the fall, she will enter a Ph.D. program in political philosophy.

Pavel Novota of Prague is a second-year master’s-level student at Charles University in the Czech Republic, studying world history and American studies.

Hamilton College junior **Zachary Oscar** is a Putnam County, New York, native, majoring in history. On campus, he

also works as a residential advisor, student government representative, and admissions tour guide.

Margaret Youngblood of Des Moines, Iowa, is a junior at Thomas Aquinas College, where she studies classical liberal arts and serves as the founder and president of her college’s Intercollegiate Studies Institute chapter.



Back row: Nathaniel Urban, Pavel Novota, Zachary Oscar, Margaret Youngblood. Front row: Emily Reynolds, Abby Staysa, and Nayeli Riano.

The summer intern team also includes one recipient of the Robert Lewit Fellowship in Education Policy: **Nayeli Riano**, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, is a senior at the University of Pennsylvania. She majors in English and history, while also working at the university’s Rare Books & Manuscripts Library.

The interns conducted research, wrote blog posts, and participated in supplemental events, including lunches with guest speakers and a tour of the Pentagon. As Riano explained, “ACTA provides an environment where I can not only expand on my interest in education policy and acquire practical work skills, but also play an active role in their greater mission and become an integral part of their team.” ●

INSIDE ACADEME published by ACTA; 1730 M Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036

Publisher: Michael B. Poliakoff • Editor: Alexis Zhang • Production & Design: Lauri Kempson

Telephone: 1-888-ALUMNI-8 • Email: info@GoACTA.org • Website: www.GoACTA.org • Blog: www.goactablog/the_forum

Interview with History Advocate David Bruce Smith

ACTA President Michael Poliakoff and Digital Media Producer Christine Ravold interview David Bruce Smith, president and founder of the Grateful American™ Foundation, for Higher Ed Now.

CR: David, what made you decide to start the Grateful American Foundation?

DBS: My father referred to himself as a grateful American. Nothing gave him more pleasure than kids learning and enjoying history. The only way he felt democracy could survive was through education.

CR: When Louise Mirrer, President of the New York Historical Society, received ACTA's Philip Merrill Award, she said "Americans have a great case to make for American History. But we do a poor job of telling our story." What should we be

telling in our story?

DBS: Louise is one of my judges for the Grateful American Book Prize. We've talked about this. One of the problems is often the way in which history is taught is BORING. . . . Michael, would you agree that proficiency will not improve unless there's interest in the material and interest from the teacher?

MP: You're absolutely correct. There's more out-of-field teaching in K-12 history than in almost any other field.

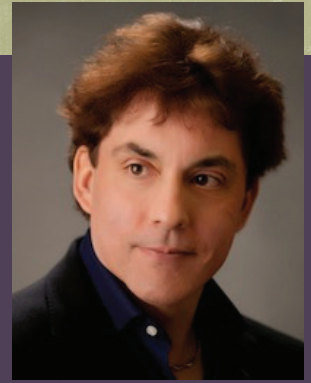
DBS: It seems to me when 82% of kids in 8th grade are not proficient, part of the problem is what they are not being taught. . . it's not all their fault . . .

MP: The teacher's duty is to get to know material so well that it comes alive for all different kinds of learners. That means

being on top of those moments that recreate the drama.

DBS: One of the things [Abraham Lincoln] said in the Gettysburg Address, was his hope that these soldiers will not have died in vain. Everybody who's interested in perpetuating our government of the people, by the people, for the people—must work together to make sure our democracy is preserved.

Adapted from Higher Ed Now. To hear more, subscribe to Higher Ed Now on iTunes or Pocket Casts.



In Memoriam



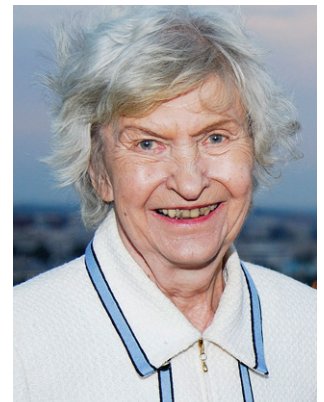
ACTA mourns the loss of **William Armstrong**, a dedicated public servant and higher education leader. Throughout a long career in business, state and national government, and university leadership, his every action sought to reflect wisdom, kindness, and principles founded in his unwavering devotion to God. Elected at age 25 to the Colorado legislature, he later served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives and two in the U.S. Senate, before retiring in accordance with his belief in term limits. In 2006, he became the president of Colorado Christian University (CCU) and brought to CCU the efficiency and pragmatism that had characterized his work in business and government. With his team of faculty and administrators, he quickly strengthened CCU's core curriculum, making it one of only 24 colleges and universities in the nation to have an ACTA "A" rating for academic quality.

Those of us at ACTA who had the privilege of working with Bill Armstrong remember his articulate understanding of how to get things done and his optimism in approaching even seemingly intractable challenges. He was an inspiration and support to ACTA in our efforts to further academic freedom, academic excellence, and accountability in higher education. We share our condolences, but we also celebrate an exemplary life, meaningfully lived, that touched many.

We also mourn the passing of dedicated ACTA supporter, **Eleanor Merrill**. Born in 1933, Mrs. Merrill was a distinguished patron of higher education and a dynamic figure in Washington journalism. She served on the Board of Trustees of her alma mater, Dickinson College, and on the founding Board of Visitors of the University of Maryland's College of Journalism, as well as on the boards of Ford's Theatre, and the Kennedy Center, among other important civic and cultural institutions.

Mrs. Merrill and her late husband, Philip Merrill, a founding member of ACTA's National Council, were steady supporters of ACTA from its inception. ACTA commemorates Mr. Merrill by presenting the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education at the annual Merrill Award gala dinner, at which Mrs. Merrill and her daughters were a gracious presence on several occasions.

Mrs. Merrill's daughter Cathy Merrill Williams continues her parents' service in media and higher education as publisher of the *Washingtonian* magazine and chair of the Board of Visitors at what is now the Philip Merrill College of Journalism. We will miss Eleanor Merrill, but with her tremendous contributions to the world of education and culture, she leaves behind a memory that is a blessing and an inspiration. ●





INSIDE ACADEME
1730 M Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

ACTA Expands Higher Ed Now Podcast

After launching the Higher Ed Now podcast in 2015, ACTA has expanded its reach, releasing a new episode every two weeks. The episodes are available at no cost on GoACTA.org, iTunes, and Pocket Casts, and they have attracted a growing listener base.



ACTA's Christine Ravold talks with Professor Robert P. George of Princeton University.

Higher Ed Now features higher education experts who discuss topical issues such as curricular reform, accreditation, higher education philanthropy, and more. Recent episodes have included appearances by Robert P. George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University, and Greg Lukianoff, president and CEO of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. Professor George discussed the phenomenon of campus illiberalism and potential antidotes for it, while Mr. Lukianoff explored the lamentable state of free speech on college campuses.

To learn more about the latest hot topics in higher education, look for new episodes every other week on GoACTA.org/higher_ed_now/podcasts or subscribe on iTunes or Pocket Casts to receive automatic updates.