

## In This Issue...

- 2 In Box  
Show Me Missouri's  
Public Universities
- 3 ACTA and Obama Say:  
Bring Back ROTC
- 4 Lecture Wows Harvard  
Students  
Economy Sinks, But  
Tuition Bubble Expands
- 5 New Articles Speak Out  
on Accreditation,  
Post-Tenure Review
- 6 ATHENA Roundtable  
Attracts Record Crowd
- 8 Yale's "Indispensable  
Man" Wins Merrill  
Award  
Philanthropists Discuss  
Higher Education
- 9 Heard on Campus
- 10 Trustees as "Big Whigs"
- 11 In Memoriam  
ACTA Additions
- 12 ACTA on the Road

## Academic Excellence and the Financial Crisis

By Anne D. Neal, ACTA President

To say that the nation's attention is squarely focused on the economy these days is an understatement. As the stock market keeps on sinking and 401(k)s follow suit, stories about bailouts, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the FDIC have dominated the headlines—and many Americans' living-room conversations.

One does not hear, however, much discussion of an infinitely more important question: Are we preparing leaders and citizens who can understand and think critically about crises like this?

Regrettably, I fear the answer is "no." And that is where the American Council of Trustees and Alumni comes in.

A recent ACTA survey of 100 of the leading universities in the country revealed that only one, the University of Alaska An-

chorage, requires its students to take an economics class. The rest—including all of the Ivies, as well as the University of Michigan, UCLA, and Duke—are not doing anything to see that their graduates are economically literate.



Of 100 leading universities surveyed by ACTA, only one, the University of Alaska Anchorage, requires economics.

As the financial crisis has underlined, economics is now an integral part of modern life. We give out Nobel Prizes in economics, trade with the entire world, and feel the effects of economic crises on the other side of the globe. Our universities' failure to make sure the next generation grasps the fundamentals of

this crucial science is simply unacceptable.

Unfortunately, the dearth of economics requirements is part of a broader sad story that ACTA has been documenting for well over a decade. As we showed in our report *The Hollow Core*, in college after college,

(continued on 5)

## Restoring ROTC on Campus

Are you a graduate of Harvard, Yale, Brown, Columbia, Stanford, Tufts, or Chicago? Your alma mater does not allow ROTC on campus, and ACTA is doing something about it. Read more about our campaign—and how you can help—on page 3.

[www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org)

[info@goacta.org](mailto:info@goacta.org)

1-888-ALUMNI-8

**Michael Leo Pomeranz, Class of 2009**  
**Yale University**  
**New Haven, CT**

“My stint as Robert Lewit Fellow ends in about half an hour. It has been such a pleasure working with all of you; my friends are incredulous when I tell them about the friendly and dynamic work environment over at ACTA...I’m glad I got to play a small role in fighting the good fight. Keep it up, and let me know when you come to visit in New Haven!”

*Editor’s Note: The Robert Lewit Fellowship in Education Policy, sponsored by ACTA board member and Harvard graduate Dr. Robert T. Lewit, is awarded yearly to a college student with a strong academic record and an interest in higher education reform.*

**John and Joan Mendenhall**  
**Greenwich, CT**

“We wanted to thank you for inviting us to attend the [ATHENA] meeting in New York on October 17. We thought you put together an outstanding program....we are glad that your organization is truly bipartisan. Many thanks again.”

**R. Byron Attridge, Chairman**  
**Watson-Brown Foundation**  
**Atlanta, GA**

“I particularly enjoyed the evening’s talk by Professor Mark Bauerlein, which confirmed my concerns about academia in general and Emory in particular. Hopefully, your good work will help to stem this tide which is eroding Western Civilization.”

*Editor’s Note: ACTA’s Decade Society, Society of Fellows, and guests gathered in June at Emory University for a dinner discussion with Emory professor Dr. Mark Bauerlein.*

**Bernie Marcus, co-founder**  
**Home Depot**  
**Atlanta, GA**

“Congratulations on the progress you are making. This is a very long road and you seem to have started off on this journey very well. I believe that with endurance and tenacity your organization will make a difference. I send best wishes for your continued success.”

**Saul Levin**  
**Distinguished Professor of Ancient Languages Emeritus**  
**Binghamton University**  
**Chandler, AZ**

“The recent issue of *Inside Academe* is most alarming for the report about the University of Delaware. There, as you point out, the purpose of education has been subordinated to indoctrination. Once again, let me declare my appreciation to you and ACTA.”

**Sandra N. Lockwood, Chair**  
**Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training**  
**Annual Conference**  
**Ponte Vedra, FL**

“It is my pleasure to extend the gratitude of the entire ACCET organization to you for delivering our keynote speech at the Closing General Session. Your treatment of the Future of Accreditation was a fresh and innovative perspective. It was a bold approach to the variations between national and regional accreditation, one that our sector rarely hears! In the midst of your very full agenda, we appreciate your accepting our invitation to speak.”

## Show Me Missouri’s Public Universities

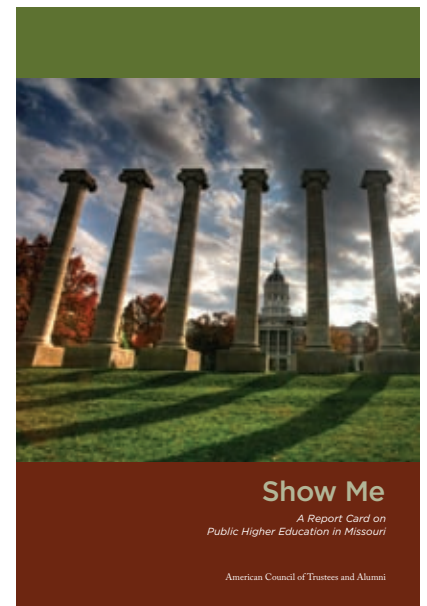
By David Azerrad, ACTA Program Officer

In October, ACTA released the third in its series of report cards evaluating public universities in the states. After the reports on North Carolina and Georgia, now comes *Show Me: A Report Card on Public Higher Education in Missouri*.

The report’s publication comes at a time when Missourians have just elected a new governor who campaigned on a promise to make higher education in the state more affordable. ACTA’s report underscores the work that lies ahead on this important issue. Both the University of Missouri System and Missouri State University receive failing grades in cost and effectiveness; increases in tuition have far outpaced inflation while graduation rates remain disturbingly low. General grades on the four areas studied are shown on the next page.

Missouri institutions performed particularly well in general education. The state is strongest in composition, math, and science and weaker in literature, economics, foreign

(continued on 3)



# ACTA and Obama Say: Bring Back ROTC

By Michael Schilling, ACTA Program Associate

In recent remarks at Columbia University, President-Elect Barack Obama denounced Columbia's practice of banning the Reserve Officers Training Corps from campus. Editorial boards at the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and other newspapers quickly agreed.

To capitalize on this momentum, ACTA launched a campaign to convince Brown, Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, Tufts, and Yale to overturn their bans of ROTC on campus. These elite universities—which receive millions in taxpayer funding from the federal government—force students who wish to pursue careers in the military to go off-campus for training and, in some instances, refuse students credit for ROTC classes taken elsewhere.

Specifically, ACTA called upon each university's board of trustees to become involved in this crucial issue. Most boards have ignored their responsibility to be accountable to taxpayers and to respect their students' right to explore military careers. In the wake of our request, the Yale Political Union voted to support ROTC's return and the student newspapers at Yale and Tufts editorialized in our favor. At press time, Columbia is also about to hold a student referendum

on the issue, and many ACTA members have followed up with their own letters to trustees and administrators.

Sadly, many of the universities have responded to ACTA's campaign with misleading statements—to students and concerned alumni.

For example, one institution claimed that the impetus for changing ROTC policies must come from the faculty, arguing it is a "curriculum issue." But the truth is that trustees can and should set large-scale strategic priorities for their universities—and fine academic institutions should not impair students' ability to be represented among the future leaders of the American military. Universities such as MIT and UNC Chapel Hill have both welcomed ROTC on campus and encouraged community discussion of "don't ask, don't tell."

Perhaps the most troubling responses are from schools that, even as they prohibit ROTC on campus, claim to support it wholeheartedly. The usual justification is that the opportunity is available off campus and that there is not enough interest—on the part of the military or the students—to have a battalion on campus. Alumni should not be misled by this excuse.

First, the military is interested in beefing up ROTC. Just weeks ago, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* published a story on this, quoting military officials and spotlighting the University of Maryland's Baltimore County campus—which is going the extra mile to make ROTC opportunities available to students. While the "elite" universities dissemble, UMBC and others are outflanking them.

Second, the campus ROTC bans make student non-interest a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many students who rely on ROTC funding to pay for college will not choose to attend a school without an ROTC detachment on campus. And the program's non-presence on campus makes it difficult to recruit students who did not intend to participate when they enrolled at the university.

ACTA is continuing to press this critical issue with these seven universities and in the national media. If you, like me, are a graduate of one of them and would like to be part of our campaign, please call our office at 202-467-6787. And if you've already taken part, thank you! ●

*Editor's Note: Michael Schilling is a graduate of Tufts, one of the universities that ban ROTC from campus.*

## Show Me, *continued from 2*

language, and American history.

The University of Missouri Board of Curators received generally high grades and was praised for the transparent manner in which it operates as well as its efforts to improve academic quality, contain costs, and debate key issues. Curator David G. Wasinger endorsed the report and praised it as "thorough, informative and enlightening." He also expressed "hope that it serves as a catalyst to improve higher education in Missouri."

The report is available on our website, [www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org). If you would like to receive a copy, please indicate your interest using the enclosed envelope. ●

### PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MISSOURI

General Education	P
Intellectual Diversity	F
Governance	
University of Missouri System	P
Missouri State University	F
Cost and Effectiveness	
University of Missouri System	F
Missouri State University	F



## Lecture Wows Harvard Students

In October, Harvard Law School inaugurated the **Herbert W. Vaughan Lecture Series**, a program that brings in distinguished speakers to talk about “the founding principles and core doctrines of the U.S. Constitution.” This is the latest in a growing trend of alumni-supported lecture programs intended to enhance students’ intellectual experiences. In this case, the lecture series’ namesake, Wiley Vaughan, is a long-time and dedicated ACTA member who has shown yet again that active and engaged alumni can make a difference in our colleges and universities.

The first Vaughan Lecturer was Supreme Court Justice and Harvard Law alumnus Antonin Scalia, and he addressed a packed house. Scalia’s speech, “The Methodology of Originalism,” addressed topics as wide-ranging as the Founders’ historical context and the recent overturning of the District

of Columbia firearm ban—arguing that those charged with interpreting the law ought to respect as closely as possible the original intent of those who drafted it. The lecture concluded with a robust question-and-answer session with students who—according to an article in the *Harvard Crimson* and a firsthand account from our own Harvard Law alumna, Anne Neal—came away impressed.

It is safe to say that students at Harvard Law School are not regularly exposed to the types of arguments that Scalia advanced in his lecture—and that for many students, his speech was a welcome new perspective. ACTA applauds and thanks Mr. Vaughan for adding some extra variety to the Harvard Law School experience, just as he has done with his generous support of excellent programming at other universities. ●

## Economy Shrinks, But Tuition Bubble Expands

By Sandra E. Czelusniak, ACTA Program Officer

Along with reports of negative economic growth, newspapers are carrying stories about college tuition hikes that are sure to follow this credit crunch. Generally speaking, economic downturns tend to lead to a decrease in state appropriations for public higher education, which then lead to an increase in tuition as schools attempt to “fill the gap.” But it does not have to be that way—nor does the public want it to be that way.

In a recent survey by Public Agenda, nearly half of the respondents believed that public higher education needed to be “fundamentally overhauled,” and similar numbers believed that they were not getting their money’s worth from their investment in higher education. For the reason why, one need look no further than ACTA’s own studies, which reveal significant knowledge gaps among college students in basic fields like literature, history, math, and science—or the complaints of many employers that recent graduates need remedial instruction in writing and problem solving. Clearly, ever-expanding tuitions have not brought a corresponding expansion in student learning; if anything, there seems to be an inverse relationship. In these uncertain economic times, families cannot afford another mountain of debt to pay for what is increasingly being seen as an inferior education.

However, there is hope that a university, through an active and engaged governing board, can re-focus its attention on student learning—without having to raise costs. In ACTA’s most recent publication, *Show Me*, we document how cuts in state appropriations can actually be a positive spur for change. In 2006, for example, the University of Missouri Board of Curators, working with the administration, identified \$20 million worth of savings in administrative expenditures after the state government announced budget cuts for higher education. These included the consolidation of redundant administrative programs, a more effective use of money-saving technology, and the review of under-performing academic programs. This streamlining puts the emphasis back on teaching and learning—where it belongs. And as such, the UM System’s administrative costs rose noticeably slower than their instructional costs between 2002 and 2007. Perhaps, starting with trustees, other universities can follow Missouri’s example. There is no better time to do so than now. ●



# “SPEAKING UP”

## New Articles Speak Out on Accreditation, Post-Tenure Review

By Noah Mamis, ACTA Program Associate



2008 issue of *Change*, edited by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, we penned “Seeking Higher-Ed Accountability: Ending Federal Accreditation.” In it, we argue that the federal government’s system of accreditation “has not stopped higher education’s slide, [but] it has contributed to it.” Accreditation, which was established to ensure that students are actually learning, is now becoming a mechanism for enforcing ideology on schools. The process suffers from “structural problems,” we write, such as “secrecy, low standards, and little interest in learning outcomes.” We suggest several simple solutions: decoupling federal student aid from accreditation; encouraging competition among accrediting agencies; and providing more alternatives

ACTA’s profile is only rising, thanks in part to articles appearing in two “trade” magazines. First, in the September/October

to the existing process. ACTA encourages trustees to stand up and challenge accreditors who seek to undermine their fiduciary role.

Our second article, “Re-viewing Post-Tenure Review,” appeared in the September/October 2008 issue of *Academe*, the bulletin of the



American Association of University Professors. In it, we describe the public’s significant lack of confidence in the current tenure system. Furthermore, while some universities have responded to public concerns by implementing a form of post-tenure review, must have undercut these efforts by failing to implement programs designed to ensure genuine accountability. In the face of a patchwork of post-tenure policies, we call for trustees to ensure institutions “conduct regular self-assessments to track how well the process is working and to make improvements when necessary.” Though that sounds simple, there is much work to be done. ●

## Academic Excellence,

*continued from 1*

critical subjects like math, science, and American history have become optional. In fact, most well-known universities don’t even demand that their English majors read Shakespeare!

And that is what academic excellence has to do with the financial crisis. Thomas Jefferson truly understood the matter when he opined that, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.” Without the benefit of a coherent and thoughtful curriculum, our children and grandchildren will not be equipped to deal with the challenges ahead. A generation of economic and mathematical illiterates will not know how to navigate complex financial issues...and a generation of historical illiterates will not know of past downturns and what to learn from them.

That’s why, at this critical time, ACTA is launching a major campaign to focus on what colleges are teaching and—more often—not teaching. If our universities are going to change, we believe concerned trustees, alumni, and donors must step up. In today’s academy, the push won’t come from the inside. It will come from you, from me, and from others like us.

That’s why I am so thankful you are part of ACTA and appreciate your standing with us at this important time. ●

## Save the Date for 2009 ATHENA Roundtable

Mark your calendars now for ACTA’s 2009 annual meeting, the ATHENA Roundtable to be held at George Washington’s Mount Vernon on November 5-6.

# 2008 ATHENA Roundtable Attracts Record Crowd

You'll no doubt recall that this fall there were a number of campaigns going on in America. On October 16 and 17 in New York City, ACTA focused on the most important one there is. No, not the campaign for Congress, or for the White House—we mean the campaign for the American mind.

After all, it was 20 years ago that Allan Bloom wrote his seminal book, *The Closing of the American Mind*—bringing to light as never before the challenges on our college campuses. Seven years later, ACTA was founded. Ever since, we have been engaged in a high-stakes campaign for the American mind—fighting the trends that have compromised our institutions of higher learning.

A record crowd of enthusiastic attendees gathered at the New-York Historical Society to survey the situation and assess our progress. The festivities began with a VIP tour of the Historical Society's brand-new *Grant and Lee* exhibit—before it was even open to the public. Our esteemed guide was Grant biographer and former college president **Josiah Bunting III**, who was integrally involved in constructing the exhibit and led an exceptional, one-of-a-kind tour.

Following the tour, members of ACTA's major donor societies—the Decade Society and Society of Fellows—attended a special dinner that dovetailed nicely with Gen. Bunting's themes. They were treated to a colloquy with former presidential speechwriter **Andrew Ferguson**, who spoke on his new book *Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe's America*. Unfortunately, back problems prevented ACTA Society of Fellows member **Lewis Lehrman**—who had intended to speak on his own Lincoln book on the anniversary of the great Illinoisan's Peoria address—from joining us.

The next morning, the conference began with a keynote address by commentator and playwright **Roger Rosenblatt**. Following a rousing introduction by his longtime friend **Martin Peretz**, the editor-in-chief of *The New Republic* and a member of ACTA's National Council, Rosenblatt expounded on the theme “Why I Left Academia, and Why I Didn't.” Relaying a number of amazing stories about his and Peretz's experiences at Harvard, he outlined why he decided not to be a full-time professor but then “rejoined” the world of academia part-time because of education's critical importance. He

concluded with a number of hilarious accounts taken from his novel *Beet*, an excellent satirical account of higher education.

The first panel, moderated by Manhattan Institute scholar **Heather Mac Donald**, systematically examined the challenges facing higher education. **Richard H. Hersh**, former president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges and Trinity College, called for faculties and administrators to do much more to make sure students are learning. **KC Johnson**, professor of history at



Richard Hersh and Heather Mac Donald



Hank Brown



Benno Schmidt



Elizabeth and Joseph Kaming

Brooklyn College, called attention to the issue of intellectual diversity, noting that more and more faculties do not even hire political, economic, diplomatic, or (especially) military historians. And Microsoft vice president **Robert L. McDowell**, a trustee of the Virginia Military Institute, put a particular focus on trusteeship—urging his fellow board members to do a much better job.

Following a vigorous question-and-answer period, the next



panel took to the podium. Moderated by ACTA program director **Charles Mitchell**, three panelists—entrepreneurs in academic reform, all!—explored strategies they are employing on campuses around the country to address the issues raised in the first panel. First came **Robert C. Koons**, professor of philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin, who is heading UT’s new Program in Western Civilization and American Institutions, recently featured on the front page of the *New York Times*. Next was **Daniel H.**

tute’s superb programs, providing “goodie bags” with Lincoln calendars and other excellent materials.

Then it was on to the leadership needed to reclaim the American mind. Philadelphia attorney **Robert L. Freedman**, a recent candidate for the Harvard Board of Overseers, moderated a discussion among three distinguished academic leaders: former University of Colorado president and U.S. Senator **Hank Brown**, former Boston University president **John Silber**, and

Columbia provost emeritus **William Theodore de Bary**. Sen. Brown, who stepped down earlier this year, outlined his administration’s successful efforts to address intellectual diversity, transparency, and good governance—for which the *Wall Street Journal* has praised him. Dr. Silber regaled the audience with tales of his tumultuous tenure at BU, where he was renowned for not tolerating anything less than academic excellence. And Dr. de Bary, who is still on Columbia’s faculty, offered a firsthand examination of the institution’s Core Curriculum that ACTA is publishing and sending to trustees.

The Roundtable concluded, appropriately, with a panel on action—featuring four trustees whose boards have set the standard. The moderator was ACTA Board of Directors member **Edward F. Cox**, whose State University of New York has—through board leadership—instituted a core curriculum that is a true national model. Next, referencing boards’ near-total cession of control over all matters academic, City University of New York board chairman **Benno Schmidt** said, “In no other area of life would we allow a group control over matters where the conflict of interest is so obvious.” Thanks to Mr. Schmidt, CUNY has experienced a nationally-recognized renaissance and has become a leader in addressing intellectual diversity.

Then came **Steven D. Weinstein**, a member of the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education and former trustee of Rowan University, who also issued a call to arms for trustees, urging them to reclaim their proper authority and to focus on cutting costs. And last was **David G. Wasinger**, a trustee of the University of Missouri System, who praised ACTA’s brand-new report card on his state and outlined his board’s efforts to address intellectual diversity and accountability. ●



**John Silber and William Theodore de Bary**



**with Steve Weinstein**



**KC Johnson and Robert McDowell**

**Lowenstein**, professor of law at UCLA, who is awaiting administrative approval for a similar program on his campus. And last but not least, Georgia Tech alumna **Orit Sklar** discussed a new group she co-founded, the Alliance for the Future of Georgia Tech—which is promoting academic excellence at Tech and outlining positive steps alumni can take.

Over lunch, **James G. Basker**, president of the Gilder Lehrman Institute for American History, offered a brief look at the Insti-

# Yale's "Indispensable Man" Wins Merrill Award

By Noah Mamis, ACTA Program Associate

This year's ATHENA concluded with a gala dinner and the presentation of the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. One of Yale's great

professors, **Donald Kagan**, accepted the prize at the Colony Club on New York's Upper East Side. Following cocktails and dinner, federal judge and former Yale general counsel **José Cabranes** offered a warm and engaging tribute to Professor Kagan, saying that "he has been Yale's indispensable man—the outstanding faculty member who courageously confronts every effort to impose explicit or implicit codes of speech; who resists institutional movements to-

ward groupthink; and who...unabashedly defends the role of the United States in world affairs." Truly, a man after ACTA's heart.

After an introduction by **Nancy Merrill**, president of the Merrill Family Foundation, Professor Kagan himself took the

stage and gave an impassioned speech, imploring participants to be freshmen—to approach issues from an independent perspective and to open their minds to a broad range of ideas

and philosophies. He warned against being a sophomore, which, as its Greek root makes clear, means self-satisfied, opinionated, and know-it-all. Kagan offered powerful reminders of the importance of dispassionate observation in academia. As an acknowledgment of his accomplishments, Professor Kagan, who was also once head of Yale athletics, was presented with a print of the 1887 Yale College football team, victorious over Har-

vard. Professor Kagan's speech has been printed and is available on our website, [www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org). ●

*Editor's Note: Noah Mamis is a Yale graduate and a former student of Professor Kagan's.*



**Nancy Merrill, Donald Kagan, José Cabranes, and Anne Neal**

## Philanthropists Discuss Higher Education

By Charles Mitchell, ACTA Program Director

In September, the Philanthropy Roundtable—a membership organization of large donors and grantmaking foundations—held a well-attended conference on the Harvard campus entitled "Promise and Peril: Higher Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." ACTA president **Anne D. Neal** coordinated and chaired the conference, which explored key questions including what civic role colleges should play, the future of liberal arts education, and ways to innovate on college campuses.

Former Harvard president **Lawrence Summers** gave the keynote address, remarking that he had "followed" and "valued" ACTA's work, which he described as "extremely important." He called upon universities to reject the "cafeteria approach" to curricula and to teach students about American national identity and culture.

Other speakers included ACTA friends **Andrew Delbanco**, Julian Clarence Levi Professor in the Humanities at Columbia; **Carl J. Schramm**, president and CEO of

*(continued on 10)*



Former Harvard president **Lawrence Summers** gives the keynote address.





# H E A R D C A M P U S ON

## Colorado Regents Address Student Learning

At its October meeting, the University of Colorado Board of Regents approved a program that will begin testing samples of freshmen and seniors by the 2009-10 school year. The tests will measure critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills in an attempt to assess the educational value of the students' experiences. This is one more example of trustees putting accountability first and making a solid effort to ensure their institution is teaching essential skills and knowledge.

## Hamilton Institute Celebrates Constitution Day

On September 17, Sixth Circuit Judge Jeffrey S. Sutton gave an address at the alumni-supported Alexander Hamilton Institute to commemorate Constitution Day. As previous issues of *Inside Academe* have noted, the AHI is an independent 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the study of the Western tradition. It was originally intended to be a center within Hamilton College, after receiving the administration's approval and a donor's generous pledge, but was ultimately spurned after a faculty uproar. ACTA friends report that Judge Sutton's lecture was well attended and followed by a vigorous question-and-answer period.

## California Regents Take a Stand for Accountability

According to an article in the *San Jose Mercury News*, the University of California Board of Regents has put the brakes on the rehiring of retired employees. This move came in the wake of media coverage, revealing that taxpayers in

the state of California were paying the UC-Berkeley police chief a whopping salary of \$194,000 a year after she had taken a \$2.1 million retirement package. According to university spokesman Paul Schwartz, the police chief was one of an estimated 1,900 UC employees retired and rehired—and, in this case, without searching for a replacement. The Regents' new policy is designed to prohibit such wasteful practices and to keep the best interests of tuition-paying students, parents, and taxpayers in mind. Bravo!

## Cheers to Cornell's President Skorton

Far too often, ACTA comes into contact with university leaders who fail to stand up for the free exchange of ideas—for example, the board of the University of Delaware, which looked the other way in the face of a troubling residential life program, and the administration at Brandeis University, which has harshly sanctioned a professor for making "controversial" comments in the classroom. In September, however, we had the chance to laud one administrator, David Skorton, president of Cornell University. On September 29, Skorton wrote a column calling for the protection of the free-speech rights of a student newspaper that was under fire for an article some considered inflammatory.

While noting his own disappointment with the publication, the *Cornell Review*, he cautioned the numerous members of the Cornell community who demanded punishment that "The antidote to offensive speech...is more speech, not less speech." Well said.

## New Shimer President Calls for Better Curricula

In October, Thomas K. Lindsay, deputy chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, visited the University of Iowa. According to the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, he "called on universities to adopt, if not a core curriculum, a set of core questions students must consider through their college education." It's a good idea, and an appropriate one considering that he will soon become president of Shimer College, a Chicago-based Great Books college. Well said, Dr. Lindsay! ●



"I found it's impossible to be funny and politically correct at the same time."

© Wall Street Journal

# Effective TRUSTEESHIP



## Trustees as “Big Whigs”

By Amy Averell, ACTA Program Officer

ACTA regularly provides trustees with educational materials and guidance designed to help them with their governance responsibilities. But this time, we want to illustrate a bigger challenge—one that proves it’s not just trustees who need guidance! Indeed, as it turns out, students, faculty, and the general public could all benefit from a better understanding of a board’s proper role.

Our story begins with an advertisement this fall posted by a representative of the University of Texas at Austin’s student government under the headline “Wanna be in charge of UT or higher education in Texas (students only)?” Here is the text:

Apply to be the student member on the UT System Board of Regents (they control tuition, among other things)...good resume fodder for minimal work, for those who suffer from chronic hyper-life-multi-tasking syndrome. “Cow-tow with the big whigs” - to quote a friend of mine. The student is appointed by the Governor of the State of Texas.

While this student may not know it, he is singing ACTA’s tune. Proving that wisdom sometimes comes from the mouths of babes, this student points to what ACTA has been saying for some time: Too many trustees believe their role is minimal work and maximum contacts. Trusteeship is good for the resume, and a way to “cow-tow” with the “big whigs.”

And while we doubt the student intended it, we’re also grateful for the student’s confusion regarding “wigs” and “whigs”—not to mention “cow-tow”—providing further evidence that it’s time trustees took educational stewardship to heart.

Experience shows that, too often, trustees view their important role as booster rather than fiduciary—and are encouraged to do so by administrators.

Thankfully, there are many trustees out there who are more concerned about academic excellence than their resumes. ACTA exists to support them, and to increase their number. ●

## Philanthropists Discuss Higher Education, *continued from 8*

the Kauffman Foundation; **Richard F. O’Donnell**, president of the Acton Foundation for Entrepreneurial Excellence; **James Piereson**, president of the William E. Simon Foundation; and **Mark Bauerlein**, professor of English at Emory.

ACTA thanks the Triad Foundation for making the conference possible and the Philanthropy Roundtable for giving us the privilege of organizing it. ●



**Montgomery B. Brown**, director of programs at the Earhart Foundation, talks with **John M. Mutz**, chairman of the Lumina Foundation for Education.



Kern Family Foundation program director **Timothy J. Kriewall** has a discussion with Dr. Summers after his speech.

## In Memoriam: Arthur Rasmussen and R. Kendall Nottingham



Art Rasmussen

ACTA mourns the passing of two outstanding defenders of academic excellence. The first is **Arthur E. Rasmussen**, a distinguished businessman and trustee who was—along with his wife of nearly six decades, Joann—one of our earliest and most generous supporters. Throughout his involvement with higher education in general and ACTA in particular, Art was a stalwart defender of the liberal arts and of core curricula, particularly at the University of Chicago, where he studied. We are indebted to him for his example and his wisdom, and we extend our condolences to Joann and the rest of the Rasmussen family.

We likewise extend our condolences to the family of **R. Kendall Nottingham**.

Ken was a 1959 graduate of Johns Hopkins University, where he later served on the Board of Trustees. Following service in the U.S. Army Reserve and U.S. Navy, he served in a number of capacities with American International Group, including as executive vice president, and as chairman and CEO of the American Life Insurance Company. We are grateful to Ken and his wife of 48 years, Betsy, who have been good friends of ACTA and of many other charities in Washington. ●



Ken Nottingham

## ACTA Additions

ACTA is delighted to welcome three new members to its program staff.

**Noah Mamis** joined ACTA in September as a program associate, serving as ACTA president Anne D. Neal's right-hand man. Noah is a recent graduate of Yale, where he earned a B.A. in classics and served as speaker of the Yale Political Union, vice chairman of the Independent Party, and an editor of the multilingual magazine *Babel Babel*. He has been an architectural archaeologist for the Zea Harbour Project in Piraeus, Greece, as well as an intern at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels. We find the fact that this Yalie gets along well with Anne, a two-time Harvard graduate, proof of ACTA's ecumenism.

**Michael Schilling** is also a new program associate, as well as the first voice you will hear if you call our office. Mike

comes to us from Taipei, Taiwan, where he worked as an editor, a teacher, and a children's theater host. He is a *magna cum laude* graduate of Tufts, where he double-



David Azerrad, Noah Mamis and Michael Schilling

mailed in International Relations and Mandarin Chinese. While on the Tufts Competitive Ballroom Dance Team, Mike regularly placed in intercollegiate dance competitions. Today, Mike enjoys

teaching ballroom dance and partaking of fine food and drink in his spare time.

**David Azerrad** joined ACTA in November as our new program officer for media. David spent the previous four years at the University of Dallas, working on his Ph.D. in politics and teaching Principles of American Government to undergraduates. Prior to that, he lived in Malaysia and Greece for a year, working as a foreign correspondent affiliated with *The Times* of London. He holds an M.A. in political science from Carleton University and a B.A. in journalism and political science from Concordia University.

When he is not plugging away at his dissertation on John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, David can be found exploring the nooks and crannies of Washington, DC. ●





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ACTA on the Road

**September 15-16** - ACTA president Anne D. Neal chaired Philanthropy Roundtable meeting on higher education in Cambridge, MA; former Harvard president Lawrence Summers delivered the keynote address.

**October 16-17** - ATHENA Roundtable and Philip Merrill Award dinner in New York City; see page 6 of this issue.

**October 23** - Neal spoke about the role of trustees at the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse conference at Columba University.

**October 25** - Neal spoke about the problems of the current accreditation system at a meeting of the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training in San Antonio, TX.

**November 13-14** - Neal participated in John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy conference in Chapel Hill, NC.

**November 20** - ACTA program director Charles Mitchell spoke on state higher education reform at National Press Club in Washington, DC.

**November 22** - Neal debated Penn State Professor Michael Berube, author of *What's So Liberal About the Liberal Arts*, at National Communication Association conference in San Diego.

**December 2** - Neal spoke at Penn State University.

**December 16** - ACTA to hold conference discussing the ramifications of the newly reauthorized Higher Education Act at the Charles Sumner School in Washington, DC.

**January 8-9, 2009** - ACTA to participate in National Association of Scholars meeting in Washington, DC.

**January 15-17, 2009** - Neal to participate in colloquium on the university's place in a free society, hosted by the Liberty Fund, in Indianapolis.

**November 5-6, 2009** - ACTA's 2009 ATHENA Roundtable conference, George Washington's Mount Vernon.