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As Maine Goes, So Goes the Nation

When ACTA unveiled its most recent state report card, *Made in Maine*, the message was not only for Maine but for higher education across the nation. The report, released in partnership with The Maine Heritage Policy Center, evaluates the seven institutions in the University of Maine System. It focuses on four key areas of interest: what students are learning (the curriculum), whether the marketplace of ideas is vibrant (intellectual diversity), how the universities are run (governance), and what a college education costs (affordability).

“As Maine goes, so goes the nation” holds true for the troubling findings of the report, which mirror educational challenges in many states.

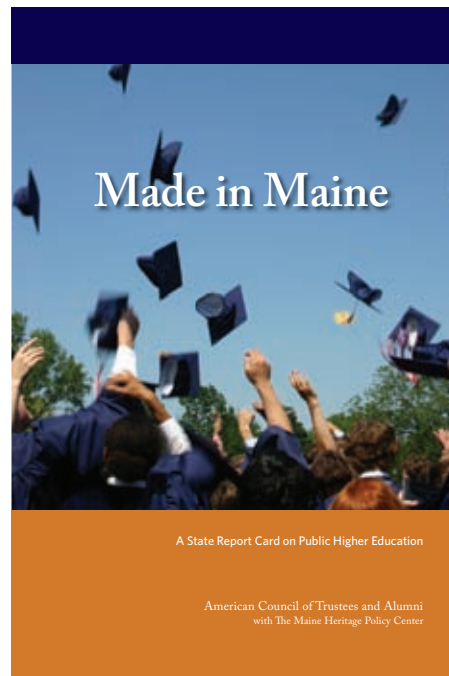
- Only two of the state’s seven universities require students to take a college-level math class, only one requires a broad literature course, and none require intermediate-

level competency in a foreign language, a survey course in U.S. Government or History, or the study of Economics.

- Statewide, less than a third of students graduate in four years, and barely over half finish within six years.
- Between 2004 and 2009, tuition increased an average of 35 percent system-wide.
- Over the 27 months studied, the board of trustees unanimously approved every single motion put before it, including over \$50 million in new capital spending. In most cases, spending decisions went from proposal to approval in 24 hours.
- 37 percent of

students agreed that “on my campus, there are courses in which students feel they have to agree with the professor’s social or political views in order to get a good grade.”

- During the 2009–2010 school year, the University of Maine System reported



(continued on 3)

ACTA Co-Hosts Trustee Seminar with Aspen Institute

Trustees are invited to participate in a day-long seminar on July 20, 2011 at George Washington’s Mount Vernon. Entitled “Academic Leadership and the Challenges Facing Higher Education,” the meeting will explore fundamental questions about the crucial role of trustees in safeguarding academic excellence and cost-effectiveness. Please call Jasmine Wolfe at 202.467.6787 for details on how to register.

www.goacta.org

info@goacta.org

1-888-ALUMNI-8

J. Tyler Pugh, Trustee
Roanoke College
Salem, VA

“Thank you for your March 29th mailing about [*What Will They Learn?*]. It is so easy, as a trustee of an institution, to focus on the operation of the institution and completely lose sight of the mission of the institution. I hope that we all don’t do that, but it is so easy to fall into that trap. Moreover, it is an institutional trap as schools want to insure the stability of the population possibly at the expense of the rigor of academic achievement.

This is a great piece with attachments that will refocus my attention every time I see it. And I will keep it in my briefcase for every meeting in the future to remind me that the product we produce is far more important than how efficiently we produce whatever the product is we turn out.”

Jean Hendrickson, Executive Director
Oklahoma A+ Schools/University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, OK

“I’ve already referenced your *What will they Learn?* publication three times. It’s so helpful to have the facts and figures at hand, not to mention the rationale.”

Kimberly Reed, Trustee
West Virginia Wesleyan College
Washington, DC

“Thank you for your insights last month as I went into my West Virginia Wesleyan College Board of Trustees meeting. Your materials prepared me to be an even more effective steward, especially for the discussion during our Academic Affairs Council meeting.”

Ed Watkins, LTC, USA (Ret)
Lilburn, GA

“I’m a graduate from the ancient days of 1956 and I thoroughly agree with ‘Restoring the Core’ at The College [of William and Mary]. Too many college graduates leave our universities with little or no knowledge of or understanding of this great na-

tion. This is dangerous, as the current political situation demonstrates. When ‘educated’ people know little of their own country, they will believe about anything they are told by an ‘authority.’ W&M, due to its history, should be a leader in reversing this situation.”

Editor’s Note: See William & Mary article on page 4.

Michael Warder, Vice Chancellor
Pepperdine University
Malibu, CA

“Congratulations on an outstanding Annual Report. Of course, the first thing I did was look up Pepperdine. We got a B. And, of course, I was dismayed. ... I then looked up the A list, and that is quite a good list indeed.

I salute your efforts to improve higher education in America. You do it in a distinctive and substantive manner.”

Mel Bernstein
Lincoln, MA

“Thank you for your letter describing the strategic steps ACTA took leading up to Harvard’s momentous decision to reinstate ROTC. This is truly one of ACTA’s greatest achievements, since it first arrived on the scene in Washington. You waged a brilliant, massive campaign with Ivy League presidents, trustees, and decision makers to bring back ROTC to their campuses—not to mention your compelling public statements and outreach to other key university campuses across the country. Congratulations on a job well done!

I am gratified to have acted as a catalyst in bringing the ROTC issue to your attention and to have developed with your generous support, the 2005 perspective paper on universities and the military, building the rationale for returning ROTC to the campuses.

Again, congratulations on the magnificent campaign ACTA waged to return ROTC to Harvard and to its sister campuses. I suspect the other Ivies and perhaps Stanford, too, will not be far behind.”

Editor’s Note: See ROTC article on the following page.

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Victory for ROTC on Campus

In our last issue, we reported that Harvard University had announced the return of ROTC after an absence of the program for 41 years. Since then, and following sustained ACTA advocacy, Yale and Columbia have followed suit. Columbia welcomed ROTC back in April, and Yale followed in May, ending bans dating from the 1980s. Famed Columbia professor emeritus and former provost Jacques Barzun wrote a powerful *Wall Street Journal* op-ed calling for Columbia to welcome back ROTC and citing ACTA's work; Yale professor and former dean Donald Kagan wrote a similar piece in the *New Haven Register*. At Columbia and at Yale, student polls and faculty assemblies announced support for ROTC's return prior to the board of trustees vote.

Responding to the decision at Yale, ACTA president Anne Neal remarked, "We praise the Yale Corporation for bridging the troubling chasm between the academy and the military. By underscoring that defense of our liberties is an important form of public service, the trustees have exercised their fiduciary responsibility to improve student life and learning. Now the trustees must work with faculty to ensure that ROTC students are enrolled in an excellent academic program."

Importantly, the new rules at Yale grant academic rank to ROTC instructors and ensure the university provides necessary facilities for ROTC. The moves at Harvard, Yale, and Columbia mean that the majority of Ivy League institutions now host ROTC programs. Penn and Cornell have had programs in place for decades, and Princeton and Dartmouth host ROTC in a limited capacity. Brown is the only remaining Ivy without an ROTC presence.

ACTA will continue to watch these schools to ensure they live up to their promise of supporting students enrolled in ROTC. ●

As Maine Goes, *continued from 1*

209 degree programs that produced five or fewer graduates, and 61 that produced no graduates at all. Despite that, the period studied saw the creation of 14 new programs and the elimination of only four.

"If the University of Maine System were itself a student, it would be repeating the semester. That's because of a series of failing grades in areas critical to providing a high quality public higher education in Maine," said Chris Cinquemani, director of communications for The Maine Heritage Policy Center, at a press conference. "Lax course requirements, roadblocks to academic freedom, a rubberstamping board of trustees, rising tuition costs—clearly the University of Maine System needs improvement."

Dr. Michael Poliakoff, ACTA's vice

president for policy, met with the Commissioner of Education, the Governor, the University of Maine leadership, and legislators. He noted that Maine's chal-

lenges are in no way unique and complimented Maine for the good resolutions of its strategic plan and urged its imple-

mentation. "Remedies for these issues will involve everyone, including the faculty," he said at the press conference. "They are things that have to be done. The problems can be solved."

Made in Maine received widespread media coverage in the state, including local television and newspapers. Dr. Poliakoff appeared on two radio programs to engage in a fuller discussion of the report and the issues it raised.

This report card follows similar ACTA report cards on higher education in the states of Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Minnesota, and Missouri. Future state report cards are already being planned, as ACTA addresses the

"three 'A's" of higher education—academic standards, academic freedom, and accountability—across the country. ●

Institution	Comp	Lit	Lang	Hist	Econ	Math	Sci
University of Maine-Augusta	√	√				√	
University of Maine-Farmington	√					√	
University of Maine-Fort Kent	√				√	√	
University of Maine-Machias	√					√	
University of Maine-Orono	√				√	√	
University of Maine-Presque Isle	√				√	√	
University of Southern Maine	√				√	√	
	P	F	F	F	F	F	P

GENERAL EDUCATION

Maine's public universities have solid requirements in composition and natural science. However, large numbers of students can graduate without a strong base of knowledge in mathematics, literature, foreign language, U.S. government or history, and economics.

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS BY INSTITUTION

Institution	Gov/						
	Comp	Lit	Lang	Hist	Econ	Math	Sci
University of Maine-Augusta	√	√				√	
University of Maine-Farmington	√					√	
University of Maine-Fort Kent	√				√	√	
University of Maine-Machias	√					√	
University of Maine-Orono	√				√	√	
University of Maine-Presque Isle	√				√	√	
University of Southern Maine	√				√	√	
	P	F	F	F	F	F	P

SYSTEM GRADE: F

INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY

Survey results and several campus speech codes suggest that institutions within the University of Maine System are not delivering on well-advertised commitments to academic freedom and expression.

KEY INDICATORS OF INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY

Offering Different Perspectives, Competing Ideas, and Alternative Claims of Truth	F
Teaching Students to Think Critically	F
Providing a Safe Learning Environment for Students	P
Ensuring Professional Responsibility in the Classroom	F

SYSTEM GRADE: F

GOVERNANCE

Board Structure and Transparency of Operations

The board is generally well structured, operates transparently, and meets regularly—though there is room for improvement in attendance and committee initiative.

BOARD STRUCTURE AND TRANSPARENCY OF OPERATIONS

Names and contact information of board members publicly available and easily accessible	P
Board meets frequently	P
Board members attend regularly	P
Effective board size	P
Periodic review of bylaws and/or policies	P
Pre-service training and/or professional development	P
Transparency of board activities and actions	P
Functioning committee structure	F
Executive Committees	F
Involvement in presidential search committees	I
Renewal of presidential contracts based on regular evaluation	P
Development of a long-range plan	I

SYSTEM GRADE: P

Board Accomplishments

The board has had a limited role in strategic planning and oversight of academic affairs and needs to be more proactive in controlling spending and advancing academic excellence.

BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Actions to improve academic quality	F
Actions to assess student learning	F
Actions to control costs and increase efficiency	F
Avoiding the rubber stamp	F

SYSTEM GRADE: F

Restoring the Core at William and Mary



President of The Society for the College, Andrew McRoberts, and ACTA's Michael Poliakoff

ACTA vice president for policy Dr. Michael Poliakoff recently gave a presentation on “The Pursuit of Academic Excellence.” The audience included a dean and members of the William and Mary Curriculum Committee.

Dr. Poliakoff began with national-level findings that students are paying more and more but learning less and less—including a recent survey that showed 36 percent of college students demonstrate no significant learning gains over four years. He then brought it home to his audience by pointing out that classes such as “History of American Vernacular Dance,” “Detective Fiction,” and “Mafia Representations” can fulfill general education courses at William and Mary. He gave examples of classes that fulfill the Lower Division Writing Requirement but which offer little evidence of disciplined, structured training in the essential skills of English composition.

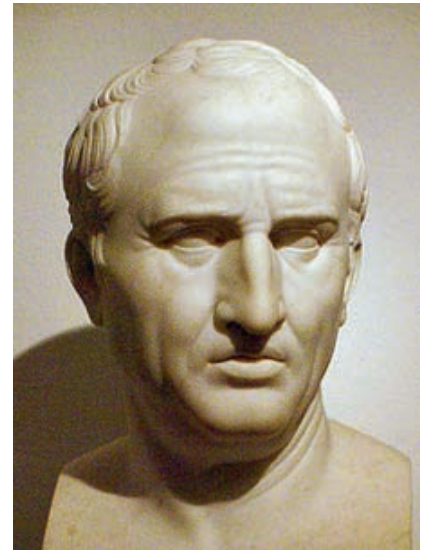
Later this year, ACTA will participate in a panel discussion with William and Mary faculty, which the provost has agreed to moderate. ACTA looks forward to being a constructive and supportive partner in William and Mary's efforts to “restore the core.” By strengthening its core, William and Mary has the opportunity to be a national model of the best in liberal arts education. ●

ACTA is on the job to help William and Mary reclaim its heritage of an outstanding, solid liberal arts education. In recent decades, like so many institutions, William and Mary has turned from a rigorous core curriculum to a large menu of options that fulfill “distribution” categories. William and Mary earned only a “C” grade on ACTA's WhatWillTheyLearn.com ratings of core curricula around the nation.

With alumni that include Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, John Marshall, 31 governors, and 60 members of the U.S. Congress, William and Mary, the nation's second-oldest university, deserves better.

A dedicated group of William and Mary alumni—The Society for the College—are now determined to “restore the core.” William and Mary's administration has agreed to an ongoing discussion about revising general education requirements. At the invitation of The Society,

Lunchtime with CICERO



Summer has brought interns Seager to advance ACTA's core mission—and to hone their skills translating Latin! Our new interns have inspired a Friday brownbag lunch at which we read and translate selections from Cicero's Verrine Orations and discuss that famous court case of 70 BCE. ACTA vice president of policy Michael Poliakoff—who taught Classical Studies at Wellesley College, Hillsdale College, and Georgetown University—leads the group. Michael notes, “The relatively young and yet unknown Cicero boldly stepped forward to prosecute a brutal and corrupt provincial governor, a man well-connected to the most powerful figures in Rome and defended by the greatest orator of the day. Cicero's against-the-odds legal victory is an inspiring story, timely and timeless, of the vindication of the rule of law against corruption and cronyism.”

And it is an invigorating context for continuing education at ACTA. ●

Is College Worth It?

Posted by José Herrera on May 17, 2011

According to a new survey by Pew, more than half of Americans (57%) say that higher education is not providing a good return on investment. A large majority—75 percent—say college is not affordable for most people. Another uneasy trend Pew mentions is that the price of a college education at both public and private institutions has roughly tripled since 1980 in inflation-adjusted dollars. A record number of students are borrowing to finance their educations, and the typical student who graduates from a four-year college with an outstanding loan starts out owing a balance of \$23,000.

ACTA believes the purpose of college is to educate the citizenry and equip them with the skills to add value in our society. Tuition is sky-rocketing, and students are not learning. In ACTA's *What Will They Learn?* study of over 760 schools, more than 450 of them received a "C" or worse in the strength of their core curricula. The average tuition & fees for an "F" school was \$28,200. Students at these schools are not only stuck with an oversized bill, but also were short-handed a quality education.

What can be done? Trustees need to cut costs and to strengthen the core curriculum to ensure that all students are learning.

ACTA Launches New Donor Societies

This month ACTA launched two new giving societies, the Chairman's Circle and the Legacy Society. The Chairman's Circle was established to recognize donors who support our work through annual gifts of \$25,000 or more, while the Legacy Society honors donors who make planned gifts to ACTA.

"We are so pleased to announce the launch of these two high-level donor societies and to be able to recognize ACTA supporters who have demonstrated a deep commitment to the future of higher education," said Anne Neal, president of ACTA.

Founding members of the Chairman's Circle include Jerome V. Bruni, Jody Wolfe, and an anonymous donor. They are key advisors and advocates for higher education reform, and ACTA's work would not be possible without them. For those wishing to make a significant investment in higher education, the Chairman's Circle presents an exciting venue to do so. Members are invited to exclusive events with key educational

leaders, called upon for advice and input for reform efforts in higher education, and recognized in all of ACTA's major publications.

Founding members of the newly formed Legacy Society are Ron and Elaine Rich, long-time supporters of ACTA's work who have named ACTA in their will. Ronald L. Rich graduated from Bluffton College in 1948 with a B.S. in Math and Chemistry where he later served as a Scholar in Residence. He obtained his Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Chicago in 1953 and has demonstrated his love of learning as a professor of chemistry at Stanford University, International Christian University (Tokyo), and the University of Oregon.

Elaine Sommers Rich received a B.A. in English from Goshen College in 1947 and an M.A. in English from Michigan State in 1950. She wrote a column for the *Mennonite Weekly Review* for 37 years and for the *Youth Christian Companion* for 11 years.

In becoming members of the Legacy

If you are interested in becoming a member of one of ACTA's donor societies, please contact Brianna Estrada at 202.467.6787.

Society, Ron and Elaine explained, "For the pleasures and safety of groups, most of us humans associate ourselves with others, but only a minority of organizations are dedicated to improving the lot of a larger society. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, ACTA, is an outstanding one of these. ... As we acknowledge the finitude of our lives it is good to find that, through ACTA, we can provide real encouragement and, in a small way, some of the means for others to promote reason and genuine openness in the continuing search for truth in all fields. Let us indeed, then, go-ACTA!"

We are grateful, indeed. ●



Wise Donors and Positive Change— A Harvard Lesson

Wise donors support higher education through carefully selected investments that support their values. An important example is the **Program on Constitutional Government** at Harvard University, which started in 1983 with a grant from the John M. Olin Foundation. The Program currently receives support through The Foundation for Constitutional Government—a 501(c)3 governed by William Kristol and Andrew Zwick that was founded to help raise funds for the Program.

Harvey Mansfield, director of the Program on Constitutional Government, found that certain important topics in political science were under-represented at Harvard, perhaps even unwelcome, and the Program provides some of the crucial intellectual balance the university needs.

In order to bring “a few more bites from the gadflies,” the Program chooses speakers who likely would not be in-

vited to Harvard. Among the eminent lecturers who have appeared are Shelby Steele, Tom Wolfe, and Saul Bellow.

ACTA’s recently updated *Intelligent Donor’s Guide to College Giving* is designed to help engaged, informed donors find and support worthy endeavors like Professor Mansfield’s Program on Constitutional Government. The *Guide* provides numerous examples nationwide of the kind of philanthropy that improves higher education.

Initiatives such as the Program on Constitutional Government function as “oases of excellence” on campus—places where students can find academic rigor and free inquiry. If you are considering making a donation to higher education, ACTA will be happy to work with you to ensure that the funds are used for projects in which you can feel confidence and pride. ●

New Faces at ACTA

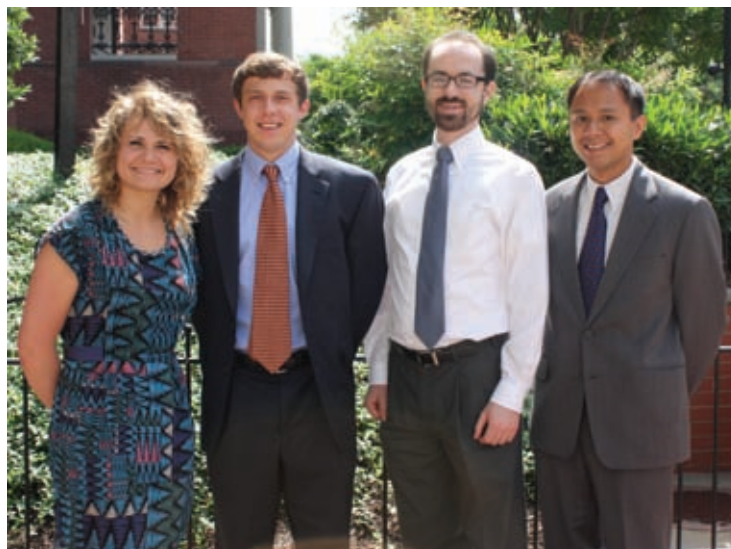
Summer is a time of transition, and this summer brings many new faces to ACTA as we expand to meet our growing needs.

Greeting you when you call or visit is **Jasmine Wolfe**, our new office manager. She recently moved to DC, having earned a B.A. in Political Science at the University of Washington, and is about to embark on a night-time graduate program in International Affairs at George Washington University.

Serving as ACTA’s new program officer for trustee affairs is **Armand Alacbay**. He received a B.A. in Economics and English from the University of Virginia and his J.D. from George Mason University School of Law. Prior to

joining ACTA, he worked as a trial attorney and managed an education services startup company. Armand currently serves as the president of the alumni association for Thomas Jefferson High School for Science & Technology.

William Gonch, the most recent addition to the What Will They Learn? team, comes to us from Philadelphia where he received a B.A. in Comparative Literature at Penn and an M.A. in Creative Writing from Temple. He previously taught composition and creative writing at Temple, while also working as a freelance reporter at the *Catholic*



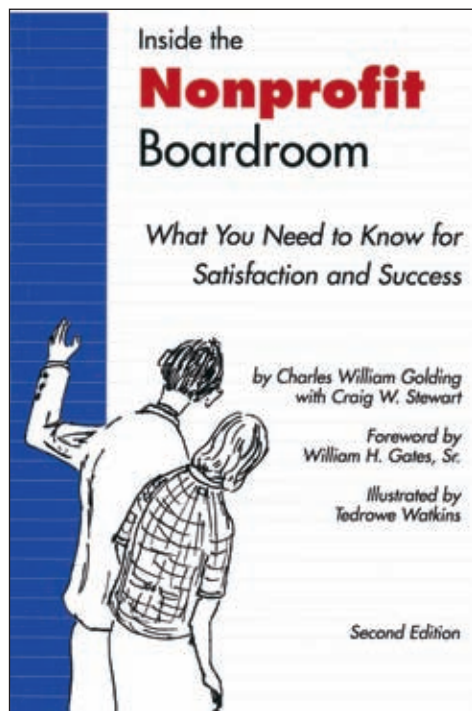
Jasmine Wolfe, Max Brindle, William Gonch, and Armand Alacbay

Standard and Times.

Taking on a prominent role in ACTA’s traditional and



ACTA Partners with the Gates and Apex Foundations



This month ACTA partnered with three engaged trustees—William Gates Sr. and Bruce and Jolene McCaw. Through the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Apex Foundation, ACTA provided 10,000 college and university trustees with the helpful book, *Inside the Nonprofit Boardroom*. Written by the late William Golding with Craig Stewart, this book helps trustees ensure that their trusteeship is effective, successful, and satisfying.

College trustees around the country received a personal letter from William Gates and the McCaws reflecting on the responsibilities of trusteeship. “Increasingly, donors, governors, state legislators, and the public are demanding clear performance measures and proof of the value added from higher education.” The authors urged trustees to “turn to ACTA for further advice and guidance as [they] encounter the particularly challenging governance issues ahead.” We could not be more pleased with this endorsement!

And trustees were pleased as well. Dozens expressed their gratitude—the board chairman for Syracuse University requested 70 additional copies to send to friends and colleagues, and a Virginia Military Institute trustee wrote, “Your book comes to me at a very opportune time. ... I realized again why I am serving on the Board of Trustees. ... It was very inspirational.” ●

New Faces, *continued from 6*

social media efforts is **Max Brindle**. Max is a recent graduate of Hamilton College, where he majored in Government and worked with the Alexander Hamilton Institute. While in school, Max interned for the *American Spectator* and the National Journalism Center—and spent a summer working on an archaeological dig in Sicily.

Armand, William, and Max are part of the Koch Associate Program, which develops the knowledge and skills of participants for careers in the non-profit sector.

Summer is also the start of “intern season” here in the nation’s capital, and this year has brought an outstanding group to ACTA. The interns will focus

on two of our most successful projects: updating our database of over 10,000 college and university trustees and doing research for our online college guide website, www.whatwilltheylearn.com.

Rachel Wagley, a 2011 graduate of Harvard, is one of two **Robert Lewit Fellows in Education Policy** this year. Following her time at ACTA, Rachel will head to Thailand as a Fulbright scholar, where she plans to teach percussion and study Buddhist moral thought.

Our second Lewit Fellow, **Bijan Aboutorabi**, is a rising junior at Yale who is majoring in Humanities. Joining Bijan is his roommate, **Ken Hershey**, also a rising junior at Yale who plans to major in History and attend law school

after graduation. Ken is ACTA’s first **Leonard Litwin Fellow**. Also a member of the What Will They Learn? team is intern **Greg Lewin**, a rising senior at George Washington University. Majoring in Early Modern European Studies and International Affairs, Greg plans a career as a scholar of early modern warfare. And, finally, assisting ACTA in our development efforts and special events is **Natasha Malik**, a 2011 graduate of Patrick Henry College who majored in International Politics and Policy.

It’s a terrific team, and all are already hard at work advancing ACTA’s mission to ensure academic freedom, excellence, and accountability at America’s colleges and universities. ●



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Peter McPherson, president,
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Land-Grant Universities

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November 3-4, 2011

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