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## Renewing California's Dream for Higher Ed

Lately, California higher education has heard sharp criticism from the governor, students, and irate legislators over expenditures and effectiveness, accompanied by a firestorm of press. Now, ACTA's newest state report, *Best Laid Plans: The Unfulfilled Promise of Public Higher Education in California*, released this month, analyzes the troubling trends in the nation's most admired state system of higher education. The report—prepared with the assistance of the Pacific



Protestors at meeting of California Board of Regents on tuition in July 2011.

Research Institute—looks at developments in cost-effectiveness, educational quality, intellectual diversity, and institutional governance. And like all the best laid plans of mice and men, some things have gone awry.

• **Costs are out of control.** Within the last five years, tuition and fees at California four-year public universities have increased at least 63%. At some schools they have nearly

doubled. But rising tuition is not new: in the five years from 2001-2002 to 2006-2007—well before the financial crisis—tuition increased by an average of 47%.

• **Waste and mismanagement squander scarce resources.** California public universities spend far too much money on new construction and administration. New buildings can cost tens, sometimes hundreds of millions of dollars, and annual debt service payments have more than doubled in

the past ten years. And despite the grinding financial crisis, both Cal State and UC have put procedures in place that could raise top executive salaries.

In addition, the facilities in which the public has invested are not effectively used. Qualified community college graduates clamor for admission to Cal State and UC, but California's classrooms often sit empty.

(continued on 3)

## Register for 2012 ATHENA Roundtable

ACTA's 2012 ATHENA Roundtable will be held **November 9** in Washington, DC. An exciting roster of speakers will discuss what American higher education was, is and should be. Presenters include **Joseph Ellis**, professor of history at Mount Holyoke, **Ken Starr**, president of Baylor University, and **Richard Arum**, author of *Academically Adrift*. The event will culminate with a gala dinner and presentation of the 2012 Philip Merrill Award. Register at [www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org) or call us at 202-467-6787.

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**Molly Bergman, Assistant Professor**  
**University of Texas Health Science Center**  
**San Antonio, TX**

“The site [whatwilltheylearn.com] is a great resource for me. I’ve used it for personal reasons—recommended the site to friends with high school children, and plan to use the database when my children are searching for colleges—and as a professional resource when evaluating applicants to the graduate program at my academic institution. So thank you for this great addition.”

**Philip Stambovsky, Adjunct Professor**  
**Fairfield University Department of Philosophy**  
**Fairfield, CT**

“Thanks so much for the signs that ACTA’s hard work—YOUR hard work—is making the kind of difference we all hoped it might at the outset (even before ACTA became the organization’s name). As someone who sees the trends (many disheartening, some hopeful) from “in the trenches,” I am so grateful for ACTA’s gradual but sure and well-earned ascendancy as a nationally recognized force for positive change.”

**Frank “Pepper” Laughon, Trustee**  
**Randolph-Macon College**  
**Ashland, VA**

“Keep up the good work for ACTA—you are making great strides. [Randolph-Macon] is working hard to meet our challenges. Your direction has helped us see the light.”

**Natasha Hanna, Trustee**  
**Coastal Carolina University**  
**Conway, SC**

“I read all of the literature that ACTA sends to me and appreciate it greatly. It helps me ask the right questions and be a better trustee.”

**Fred Hoffman**  
**Alexandria, VA**

“Thank you for that most informative report on ACTA’s appraisal of colleges and universities in Virginia. I am sending that report to State Senator Puller in hopes it will help stimulate necessary action. I am an alumnus of Boston University. I would appreciate any similar information available on B.U. and other New England schools. Well done!”

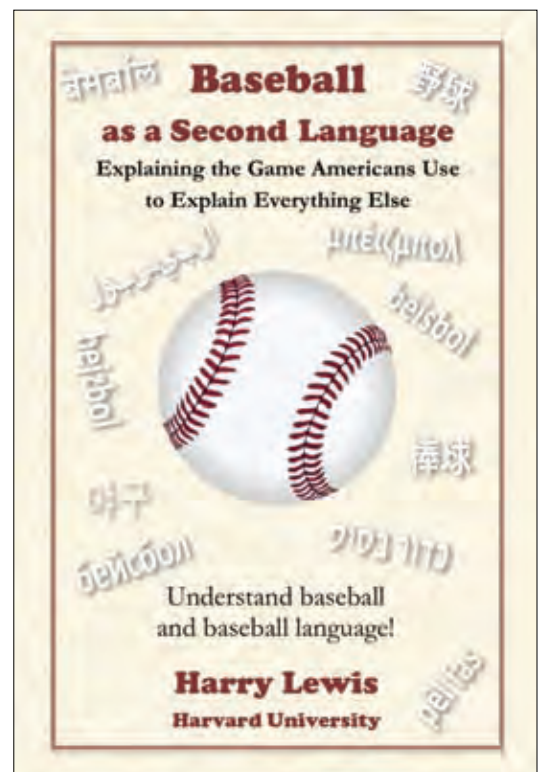
## “Double Header” for Liberal Arts Neal, Lewis Talk Academic Excellence and Baseball

ACTA friends and supporters kicked off—excuse me, led off—the baseball season with Cracker Jacks and core curricula.

An exclusive donor salon at the home of ACTA president Anne Neal featured Neal and former Harvard dean Harry Lewis. After an address from Neal, Lewis spoke about his book, *Baseball as a Second Language*, and about liberal education (Lewis has also written a book about Harvard and the liberal arts). Dr. Lewis’s book introduces baseball-speak to foreigners, teaching them idioms that Americans use without thinking: everything from off base comments to being in the ballpark.

The gathering then engaged Dr. Lewis on topics important in higher education: core curricula and the strong foundation they provide for all students, STEM courses, and shifting faculty incentives to encourage good teaching.

Opportunities to meet with key educational leaders like Dr. Lewis are ACTA’s way of thanking donors, whose support helps us go to bat for America’s college students. ●



# ACTA Shakes up Accreditation

## New Senior Researcher to Drive Change

America's higher-education accreditation system is broken. The current system—which forces schools to be certified by regional accreditors in order to receive federal money—was created to safeguard taxpayer dollars. But today it safeguards mediocrity and the status quo.

Once a school receives accreditation, it hardly ever loses that status, but new schools—especially innovative schools—often find it prohibitively difficult to obtain accreditation. The system misleads parents into believing that accreditation equals quality, and it wastes piles of money. Christopher Eisgruber, provost of Princeton University, testified that renewing accreditation can cost a single college or university over \$1 million and hundreds of hours of staff time.

That is why ACTA is working to reform the system. At a recent meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), two committee-members—ACTA's Anne Neal and former Lafayette College president Arthur Rothkopf—submitted a proposal to reform the accreditation system. The proposal would end accreditors as gatekeepers of federal funding and replace the current system with minimally intrusive certification of financial stability and educational outcomes.

This proposal was offered as an alternative proposal to what many believed was a committee consensus plan. In a notable endorsement of an alternative approach, 4 of the 11 participating NACIQI members supported the ACTA

proposal. And this breakthrough is only the beginning of a new ACTA campaign to reform accreditation.

To spearhead that effort, ACTA has hired senior researcher Andrew Gillen. Dr. Gillen will work with former U.S. Senator Hank Brown, past president of the University of Colorado system, to rethink and reform accreditation. The project will examine accreditation and federal financial aid, and identify ways to provide quality control that are transparent and equitable to both non-profit and for-profit institutions.

Dr. Gillen received his Ph.D. in economics from Florida State University; he comes to us from the Center for College Affordability and Productivity (CCAP), where he was research director. ●

### California Report, *continued from 1*

The California state legislature requires that classroom seats be occupied no less than 35 hours per week—certainly no great challenge. But *only one California school meets even this minimum standard.* Most schools are well below the minimum. At UCLA, for instance, large lecture halls are vacant for the majority of the time on Friday afternoons. On Friday, California taxpayers might be looking forward to the weekend, but for students it has already begun.

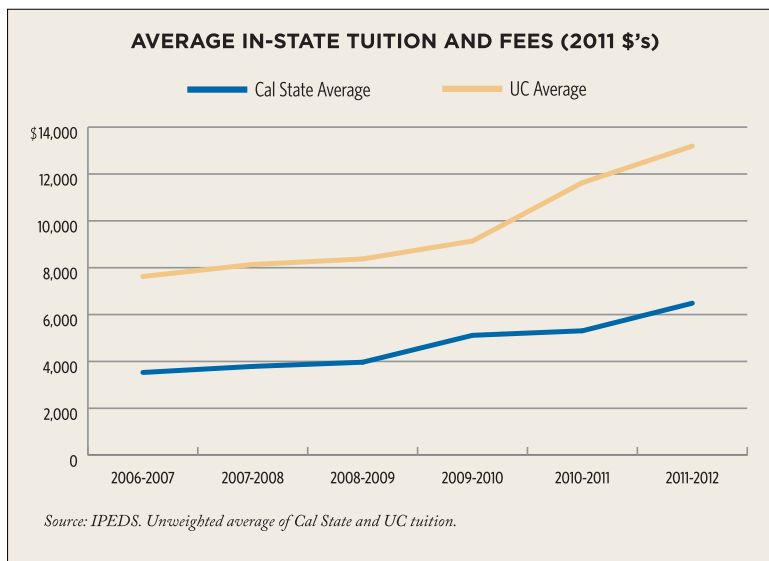
• **Students are denied access to schools.** As many as 25,000 or more qualified students may be turned away from California's campuses next year. Cal State has announced a freeze in spring enrollment, preventing most of the 16,000 students who enroll in the spring from pursuing their education.

• **Curricula are weak at the most prestigious schools.** We examined whether each university requires students to study seven

core subjects: Composition, Literature, Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Science. In the Cal State system, 17 out of 22 schools require at least four of the seven subjects; one school, Cal Poly—San Luis Obispo, requires six subjects. By contrast, no UC school requires more than three of the seven core subjects, and two schools require *none*: neither math, nor U.S. history, nor English composition, nor any other

core subject is required by UC-Berkeley or UC-Davis.

• **Schools are violating students' freedom of speech.** ACTA partnered with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Educa-



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## New Trustee Guide Addresses Alcohol and Drug Abuse



Drinking and drug use are serious problems at America's colleges and universities. Every year they lead to injury, illness, and even deaths among the student body. Trustees have the responsibility and the power to address these problems, and ACTA's newest guide for trustees is here to help. *Substance Abuse on Campus: What Trustees Should Know*, published with ACTA's Institute for Effective Governance, defines the problem of substance abuse among students, explains its causes, and gives trustees clear steps by which to address it. The brochure was mailed with a cover letter from ACTA chairman Dr. Robert Lewit, former CEO of the Metropolitan Psychiatric Group, commending it to the urgent attention of the more than 13,000 trustees who received it.

Alcohol and substance abuse have many causes, but one stands out: the campus drinking and drug culture are related to universities' neglect of their academic missions. As curricula weaken and student study-time shrinks, drinking expands to fill the void: today many students spend *more time drinking than studying*.

The guide identifies a trustee's role in controlling alcohol and drug problems on campus. It shares strategies that universities have used in the past: alcohol education programs, campaigns to change social norms, alcohol-free entertainment, and campus-community partnerships. And it articulates the relationship between discouraging substance abuse and re-invigorating the campus academic environment. As ACTA has said so often, the university is a place of learning and intellectual discovery, and trustees have the responsibility to ensure that it remains such a place. When education is the lodestar for trustees' decisions, the solutions to substance abuse,

and to so many other problems, become clear. ●

## CUNY: Protect Trustees' Role and Core Curriculum

The City University of New York (CUNY) has a problem with transfers. Each year thousands of students transfer within that system—some from one college to another, others from junior to senior colleges. And many of the institutions make it difficult or impossible for students to satisfy graduation requirements with transfer credits, forcing students to re-take classes they have already passed. Today, students in the U.S. graduate with an average of \$25,000 in debt. Requiring them to spend money and time on duplicate courses is unacceptable.

In an attempt to address the problem, trustees at CUNY instituted a new curriculum, the *CUNY Pathways Initiative*—making changes that many faculty find objectionable. The CUNY faculty senates passed resolutions condemning the new curriculum for endangering the autonomy of member campuses and for weakening schools' core curricula. Recently, they have sued the trustees, alleging that the board violated its obligation to involve faculty in setting curricula.

The trustees are right to address the transfer problem, and they should be commended for moving on a problem that has

festered long. They are absolutely right that they have authority in this area: trustees have a fiduciary responsibility for the whole university system, and everyone concerned about higher education should defend trustees who do their job. But the fact that they have authority in this area does not mean that their plan is wise.

The faculty raise serious concerns. Currently, CUNY students experience some of the finest core curricula in the nation. Brooklyn College, rightly called "The Poor Man's Harvard," is an "A" school in *What Will They Learn?*, and several other CUNY institutions do very well in ACTA's study. These schools' curricula would very likely worsen under the new plan.

The trustees should not give up, nor should they disregard the faculty. Instead they should slow down, re-think, and develop a plan that solves the transfer problem while keeping curricula intact. Chancellor Goldstein and the board have been among the most effective and engaged in the country, and we hope that they will address this challenge with the sober wisdom we have come to expect. ●



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

## New Oasis of Excellence at Emory

Donor and ACTA supporter Emory Williams has teamed with talented faculty at Emory University's Program in Democracy and Citizenship—including ACTA friend Mark Bauerlein—to form a new Voluntary Core Curriculum covering great works of Western civilization. Students who select this program will take four courses in subjects like “Foundations of American Democracy” and “The Great Books.” Each course centers around primary sources from the Western canon; students read great statesmen, philosophers, political thinkers and poets.

Emory's main core curriculum receives a C in *What Will They Learn?*, but students in the Voluntary Core Curriculum participate in a general-education program that truly stands out nationwide. In a recent letter to Emory's board of trustees, ACTA outlined how revising the

entire core, using the Voluntary Core as a model, could improve education for all of its students.

## Texas A&M \$10,000 Degree

ACTA has been saying it for years: schools don't solve the tuition problem by milking the taxpayer, they solve it by getting creative. Now, Texas A&M-San Antonio is showing the way. A&M has partnered with the Alamo Colleges, a system of local community colleges, to offer a degree costing less than \$10,000. Not \$10,000 per year—\$10,000 for an entire four-year degree. The program will integrate three different educational institutions. Students begin taking college-level courses in high school; they move on to courses at the Alamo Colleges, and finish with an intensive year at A&M. The first degree will be a Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences with an emphasis on information

technology, which will prepare students for well-paid jobs in a rapidly-growing field. What's more, students will graduate virtually free of debt, which is more than we can say of far too many schools.

## Army ROTC Returns to Harvard

Harvard took another step toward full recognition of its student soldiers when it signed an agreement with the U.S. Army ROTC to re-establish a formal, on-campus relationship. The agreement, similar to the one that Harvard signed with Navy ROTC last year, offers on-campus classroom space and financial support to Harvard students who participate in the Paul Revere Battalion, an Army ROTC unit headquartered at MIT. Harvard president Drew Faust called this a “welcome step in the long and distinguished history of military service by members of the Harvard community,” and we couldn't agree more. ●

## California Report, *continued from 3*

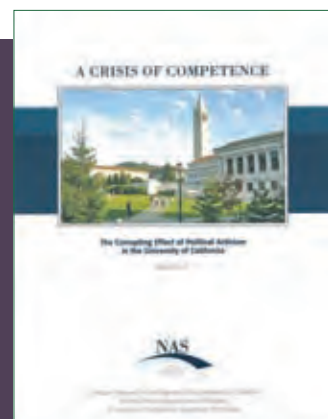
tion (FIRE) to review speech codes at California public undergraduate institutions and found that *every single one* restricts academic freedom. 18 out of 32 schools have “red light” speech codes, the most restrictive category in FIRE's ratings. Controversial emails and even jokes are subject to disciplinary action at some schools.

Public higher education in California began with a noble aim: to offer excellent, affordable higher education to every Californian who could benefit from instruction. It can still fulfill that promise, but serious problems have arisen, and trustees and regents must show leadership and take concerted action to solve them.

California's education leaders have an opportunity to lead the nation by rethinking their best laid plans and demanding a new paradigm of productive and innovative higher education. ACTA's report points the way by outlining several constructive steps governing boards can take. For a copy, please see [www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org). ●

## NAS Report Hits University of California for Political Correctness

ACTA is not alone in its concern about public universities in California. In April, the California division of the National Association of Scholars (NAS) published *A Crisis of Competence*, a report on “the corrupting effect of political activism at the University of California.” The report identifies increased politicization of UC faculty as a major threat to academic integrity. It links curtailment of academic freedom, in violation of the state constitution and regents' directives, with the omission of required coursework in American history or government. As proof of the dangers of curricular neglect, NAS cites an ACTA study that found civic illiteracy in students at 55 of the nation's most prestigious colleges and universities. NAS looks to the regents to promote objective, competitive scholarship. ACTA agrees with NAS: “only the Regents can change the direction of the University of California and return it to its proper path.”



## Former Chairman of American Airlines Raises Concerns at Alma Mater



Bob Crandall

Alumni: They are the “A” in ACTA, and they are essential to keeping colleges and universities strong. No one loves a school as much as its alumni, and no one is as well placed to deliver “tough love.”

Bob Crandall, University of Rhode Island alumnus and former Chairman of American Airlines, exemplifies the engaged, committed alumnus. After attending a lecture given by ACTA president Anne Neal, he became concerned about core requirements at his alma mater and at universities nationwide (URI currently receives an F in *What Will They Learn?*). He wrote an extended post about

ACTA’s research at the personal blog he writes on social and economic issues.

Then he wrote to the president of URI, sending along ACTA’s materials and raising concerns about URI general education, and he attracted the administration’s attention. URI’s president responded with a long, thoughtful message.

We hope that URI takes this as a wake-up call to get serious about quality and cost. Meanwhile, Mr. Crandall is doing what every engaged alumnus should: pressing his alma mater to focus on academic quality and affordability, and staying in touch with ACTA. ●



## Welcome New Board Members

At our March 2012 board meeting ACTA had the great pleasure of welcoming three new members to our Board of Directors.

Professor **Sandra Stotsky**, Endowed Chair in Teacher Quality at the University of Arkansas, is a nationally-recognized expert on academic standards, student assessment, and teacher effectiveness. She has served on the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, conducted research at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and edited the journal *Research in the Teaching of English*.

**Carl Menges** is an accomplished investor and businessman who has held senior positions at the investment banking firm Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette and several other prominent firms. He is a trustee of the New-York Historical Society and a founding board member of the Alexander Hamilton Institute, which is featured in ACTA’s *Intelligent Donor’s Guide to College Giving*.

**Robert McDowell** recently retired from his position as vice president for Information Worker Business Value at Microsoft Corporation, after more than 40 years in the information technology industry. Before joining Microsoft, he was a partner with Ernst & Young, where he founded and managed its Strategic Business Systems practice. He is also a former trustee of the Virginia Military Institute and recently served as a moderator and panelist at ACTA’s Northwest trustees’ symposium, “From Business to Boardroom: Addressing Issues of Quality and Cost.” ●

**INSIDE ACADEME** published by ACTA, Washington, DC

Publisher: Anne D. Neal • Editor: William Gonch • Production & Design: Lauri Kempson

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

# Restoring America's Memory: ACTA Testifies Before Congress



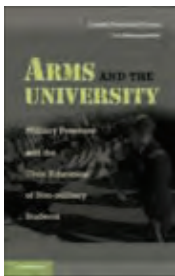
In late February ACTA president Anne Neal appeared before a House oversight subcommittee to testify on behalf of the Father of America. Congress was considering H.R. 2268, a bill that would return George Washington's birthday celebration to his actual birthday—February 22. ACTA appeared with sponsoring member Rep. Frank Wolf, historian Richard Brookhiser, and Mount Vernon vice regent and ACTA friend Lucia Henderson.

For several decades we have celebrated “Presidents’ Day,” lumping Washington in with Chester A. Arthur and Franklin Pierce—not to mention auto sales and discount lawn furniture. At the same time, too many Americans—especially young Americans—suffer from historical amnesia: a 2000 ACTA study revealed widespread ignorance of American history among seniors graduating from America's most prestigious universities. To consider only the founding period: almost half of the students did not know the purpose of the Federalist Papers, two-thirds could not recognize Washington as the commanding general at Yorktown, and more than 75% could not identify James Madison as the Father of the Constitution. To make matters worse, a recent ACTA study found that fewer than 20% of

American Colleges and Universities require students to take even one survey course in U.S. History.

National holidays play an important role in passing on the legacy of America's great heroes. Restoring celebration of George Washington's birthday would be an important first step in honoring America's past and refreshing her memory today. ●

## From the Bookshelf...



### **Arms and the University**

by Donald Alexander Downs and Ilia Murtazashvili

In ACTA's ongoing struggle to advance an engaged ROTC presence on campus, it is good to have friends like Professors Downs and Murtazashvili. They have written a profound and scholarly study of the effect that student-soldiers have on the university, concluding that

an active military presence produces many cases of “productive friction,” moments when students are confronted with challenging ideas or experiences and must grow as thinkers in order to understand them. The authors argue that “The university benefits from military presence as much as university presence benefits the military.” We heartily agree.



### **Recalling Education**

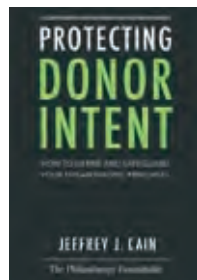
by Hugh Mercer Curtler

What is a liberal education for? In this spirited volume, Professor Curtler argues for a liberal education that develops students' positive freedom—the knowledge and judgment needed to use properly the freedom that is our privilege and birthright as Americans.

His discussion takes him through a hearty defense of standards in literature, core curricula and “canons,” and he touches on

citizenship and academic freedom—all matters of great value to ACTA.

Professor Curtler is an ACTA friend and supporter and has offered to donate the returns from his book to us. Order a copy from Amazon and treat yourself to a thoughtful, readable critique of the academy—while supporting the organization needed to reform it!



### **Protecting Donor Intent**

by Jeffrey J. Cain

Donors worry about their money with good reason: recent years have seen high-profile foundations and universities misusing donations and violating the intentions of their donors. That is why we're so glad to see *Protecting Donor Intent*, a new guide published by

the Philanthropy Roundtable. *Protecting Donor Intent* explains the challenges that face donors who wish to ensure that their gifts are used as they intend, even after their death. It advises donors about key decisions they must make, even including setting up their own foundations. ACTA has contributed our thoughts on donor intent via our *Intelligent Donor's Guide to College Giving*, and we hope that donors will consult both guides as they plan their gifts. Armed with these resources they can do more than do good; they can do good well. ●



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



ACTA releases its newest state report card— ***Best Laid Plans: The Unfulfilled Promise of Public Higher Education in California.***

The study finds troubling trends at California state institutions.

- Dramatic hikes in cost to students and obstacles to university access.
- Inadequate attention to educational quality and outcomes.
- Poor use of campus resources.

See cover article in this issue of *Inside Academe* for more details. Get the full report at [www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org).