



*Promoting
Academic
Freedom and
Excellence*

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Bias Response Team Defeated at University of Texas–Austin



Although all people of goodwill abhor racial prejudice and bias, the popular practice of deploying “bias response teams” is a step backward, inhibiting the discussions that ultimately move us forward.

On December 22, 2020, the University of Texas–Austin (UT) reached a settlement with Speech First to disband its Campus Climate Response Team (CCRT). The student group sued the university in 2018 to prohibit enforcement of policies that discouraged conservative and libertarian students from discussing controversial public policy issues on campus. While the district court originally dismissed the case, a Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals decision vacated the lower court's decision in October, leading UT to reach a settlement.

Unfortunately, bias response teams are disturbingly common in the academy today. A 2017 Foundation for Individual Rights in Education report identified teams operating on 232 campuses, including 143 at public institutions. UT's example provides a window into the extent to which institutional policies can discourage free and open inquiry. The university's residence hall manual forbade “uncivil behaviors and language that interfere with the privacy, health, welfare, individuality, or safety of other persons.” Since it did not define “uncivil behaviors and language that interfere” with the individuality of other students, it left students hesitant to take up any issues whose discussion could be deemed “racism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ageism, [or] ableism.” UT also

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Register for ACTA's 25th ^{plus one} Anniversary Celebration!

Join us for ACTA's 25th **Plus One Anniversary Celebration** on November 11–12, 2021, commemorating a quarter century of shared efforts to promote academic excellence and academic freedom at America's colleges and universities. We have planned an exciting roster of events, culminating at the storied Library of Congress with the presentation of the Philip Merrill Award to distinguished historian **Gordon Wood**. Please visit GoACTA.org/anniversary to register.

**Carl Menges, ACTA Board Member Emeritus
Former Trustee, Hamilton College**

“Michael, I just want to salute you and your organization for your far sighted . . . pardon the pun . . . and imaginative and most creative and innovated thinking in the establishment of FAR. Brilliant and most timely . . . well done.”

**David Dagan, Visiting Assistant Professor
George Washington University
Washington, DC**

“We are always searching for beneficial information for our university’s Board of Trustees, and it is wonderful to know that ACTA offers so many resources at our fingertips. I visit your website often and enjoy the online articles and publications, especially those pertaining to trusteeship.”

**John Swallow, President & CEO
Carthage College
Kenosha, Wisconsin**

“I wanted to write and thank you for ACTA’s work with Braver Angels. Cameron, my wife, has spoken so highly of your work, and I am so pleased to see the debate program you have been organizing. I am president of Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and Cameron has mounted some events for our students . . . We’ll be seeking to expand that work as the moments call for in the months ahead. All in all, thank you for the good work you do.”

Editor’s Note: In partnership with the grassroots organization Braver Angels, ACTA empowers and equips student groups at colleges and universities across the country to hold parliamentary-style debates that promote civil discourse on controversial issues.

Bias Response Team Defeated, continued from 1

encouraged individuals to report instances of speech protected by the First Amendment, but unwelcome at UT, to the CCRT, including “concerns such as a student organization hosting a party with a racist theme” and “concerns that someone has created . . . [an] offensive classroom environment.”

As ACTA pointed out at the time in an amicus brief submitted to the court, UT had created a weapon that could be used by those on one side of the political spectrum to discourage the expression of viewpoints on the other side. The process was designed to be punitive and the CCRT to behave like a criminal investigation apparatus. The CCRT conducted interviews, “track[ed] and record[ed] [bias] allegations,” and referred cases to the institution’s formal disciplinary bodies. A university police department lieutenant served on the team along with student life administrators, and they described their

work in law enforcement terminology: “offense,” “victim,” “motiv[e],” etc. When anyone who takes (or feigns) offense at an unwelcome utterance or sight can set off a burdensome and potentially reputation-damaging investigation, reasonable students will

“For too long, university leaders have turned a blind eye to such violations of students’ First Amendment rights. This will be harder now in Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana, the three states covered by the ruling.”

keep quiet.

For too long, university leaders have turned a blind eye to such violations of students’ First Amendment rights. This will be harder now in Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana, the three states covered by the ruling. (The Sixth Circuit issued a similar ruling in 2019.) As Judge

Edith Jones noted in her opinion, “The CCRT, in some measure, represents the clenched fist in the velvet glove of student speech regulation. That the CCRT invites anonymous reports carries particular overtones of intimidation to students whose views are ‘outside the mainstream.’” In remanding the case to the district court, the appeals court noted that vague regulations, coupled with “potential penalties for violating the regulations,” can have a “chilling effect” on speech.

The decision is significant for reasons that even go beyond the important changes at UT. The court also reminded public universities *why* the First Amendment applies to them. Free and open deliberation enriches our marketplace of ideas which helps to improve policy and build consensus in the political community. Without it, “the people may not ‘be free to generate, debate, and discuss both general and specific ideas, hopes, and experiences,’

(continued on 5)

U.S. Representative Cites ACTA's Research in Speech Before Congress

On December 9, U.S. Representative Greg Murphy (R.-N.C.) delivered a speech before Congress on the problem of administrative bloat in higher education and its role in the student debt crisis. In his remarks, Representative Murphy cited ACTA's Project on Administrative Costs, including our HowCollegesSpendMoney.com website, which allows users to evaluate how much colleges spend on administrative costs as compared to spending on instruction.

On the same day of his speech to Congress, Representative Murphy published "College administrative bloat is robbing our children of their futures" in the *Washington Examiner*, detailing the scope of higher education's current financial challenges and referencing ACTA's research. He wrote, "Between 1993 and 2007, administrative costs increased an outrageous 61.2%, while instructional costs increased 39.3%. According to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, noninstructional spending at colleges and universities from 2016 to 2017 exceeded the gross domestic product of 134 countries. We have seen the explosion of vice presidents, counselors, diversity coaches, and all kinds of administrative staff. Someone must supervise the addition of climbing walls,

spectacular gyms, and the now-ubiquitous 'safe spaces.'"

Representative Murphy's analysis could not be more correct, and ACTA is committed to helping institutions cut down on unnecessary costs and deliver a quality education at an affordable price. Even though colleges' financial problems have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, ACTA has

persevered through the crisis in prompting college leaders and lawmakers to implement urgently needed solutions and encourage students to seek schools that put education first. As Representative Murphy explained, "Some schools . . . are better stewards of their students' money than others. According to How Colleges Spend Money, Williams College, for example,

spends a respectable 28% on administrative costs compared to its peer institutions' average of 34%."

Since the launch of HowCollegesSpendMoney.com in 2018, ACTA has worked hard to put our resources in the hands of college presidents, trustees, and state and federal lawmakers. We are glad to see that policymakers are getting serious about runaway spending and are prepared to make our colleges and universities more accountable to the students and families that they serve. ●



The King's College Earns an ACTA "A"

Even during a pandemic year, ACTA's What Will They Learn?® (WWTL) project has continued to make progress, improving the curricula at America's colleges and universities. We are excited to announce the addition of The King's College, a Christian liberal arts institution in New York City, as the 24th school to earn an "A" grade from WWTL. The King's College requires all of its students to take courses in Composition, Literature, U.S. Government or History, Mathematics, Economics, and Natural Science, missing only Foreign Language from ACTA's stipulated seven core requirements.

The King's College's commitment to academic excellence guides its mission: "The true purpose of college is more than the green lawn and weightier than a framed piece of paper. It's about preparing you for the world you participate in during and after college." With an 18-course core curriculum, the school makes good on its promise to deliver a rigorous education. In the Politics, Philosophy, and Economics Core, "students read the literature, sacred texts, laws, and philosophical inquiries . . . that have brought us to where we are today." In addition, the college offers the more affordable King's Crossover program, which allows students to complete the first years of their education online and then finish their degree on campus.

ACTA is proud to give our endorsement to this excellent institution that seeks to provide students with a strong intellectual foundation that will guide them throughout their lives. ●

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: Our Projects in 2021



Dear ACTA Friend,

I hope that you are well as our nation continues to struggle against the ravages of COVID-19. God-willing, the situation will improve significantly in the coming months and we will see many of you at our annual ATHENA Roundtable and Gala in November as we celebrate our “25TH plus one Anniversary.”

The financial impact of the pandemic is wreaking havoc on colleges across the country. ACTA believes that the only way for these institutions to survive is to cut foolish and wasteful spending, and in doing so, emerge as better institutions, more focused and stronger than before.

The financial hardships that colleges and universities face are the result of years of administrative bloat and expensive, unnecessary programs, and they have been vastly exacerbated by the pandemic. To help institutions address these problems, ACTA will analyze spending trends and hiring patterns through an enhanced HowCollegesSpendMoney.com website and evaluate the impact that administrative spending has on tuition costs and student success. This study will provide higher education leaders, legislators, and the public with a clear picture of their schools' spending patterns so that they can take appropriate action. The goal, of course, is for schools to provide a high-quality college education at the lowest possible cost.

More and more families are beginning to doubt that a college education is worth the investment of tens of thousands of dollars. It is, indeed, all too true that many a barista at Starbucks making little more than minimum wage holds a bachelor's degree and owes \$30,000 to \$40,000 in student loan debt. This is madness. Both the cost and quality of a college education must be improved. In addition to cost control measures, faculty and college leadership need resources to guide them in strengthening their general education programs. We will issue a best practices guide that investigates how institutions evaluated in our *What Will They Learn?* report were able to improve their core curricula. We are surveying provosts to understand better the obstacles to general education reform and how to overcome them.

Student surveys have revealed a consistent decline in commitment to our First Amendment rights and the tradition of free expression on college campuses. ACTA is in the midst of a project that will provide campus-specific information to target those schools in need of reform and illuminate best practices that create a climate of intellectual diversity and open dialogue.

These are just a few of the initiatives on the horizon for the ACTA staff. Without you, our important work would be impossible. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael".

Michael Poliakoff
President

A Conversation with Philanthropist Robert Frick



In the latest installment of our Intelligent College Giving series, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff interviewed Mr. Robert (Bob) Frick about his experience with higher education giving. Bob, a successful banker, and his wife, Barbara, a former teacher, have made several major gifts to Washington University in St. Louis.

You and your wife have been donors to Washington University for decades. How did your philanthropy there begin?

For me, it started with a great college experience and strong relationships with people on campus. The faculty were really impressive. A couple years after gradua-

tion, I needed some advice. I asked for half an hour of time from a former professor of mine, the dean of the business school. He spent five hours with me. The faculty and staff at Washington University were excellent at fostering that kind of personal connection and maintaining it over the years. My wife and I started donating about five years out of school. We gave around \$50 for a number of years based on a postcard. Over time, the school made an effort to get to know us, so, as our capacity grew, they approached us with ideas that reflected our interests.

What motivated your first major gift to Washington University?

(continued on 6)



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

ACTA “A” School Featured on TV Station

Bluefield College, a Baptist liberal arts school in West Virginia that receives an “A” rating from ACTA’s *What Will They Learn?* (WWTL) report, was featured in January on WOAY TV, a local ABC-affiliated station. In the broadcast, Rebecca Kasey, Bluefield’s public relations and marketing director, commented, “It’s very humbling that we’ve received this recognition for so many years in a row. It really is a testimony to our college and what we offer to our students, making sure that they have a strong foundation when they go out and transform the world.”

The school is one of just 24 colleges and universities that earn an “A” grade for requiring their students to take courses in at least six of seven core subjects as a condition of graduation. Since the release of the 2020–2021 WWTL report, over a dozen “A” schools have touted their ratings on their university websites, social media, and promotional material, including Christopher Newport University, Baylor University, and the University of Georgia.

An ACTA “A” or “B” signals to prospective students that the school is strongly committed to developing students who will graduate well-prepared to take on the challenges of career and citizenship.

A Hidden Gem at Kansas State University

The Primary Texts Certificate program at Kansas State University is the latest campus program to earn designation as an ACTA “Hidden Gem.” The Hidden Gems initiative, an expansion of our *What Will They Learn?*® project, recognizes exceptional honors programs that focus on the study of American government or history and the Great Books. By participating in one of the Hidden Gem programs, students can receive a robust liberal arts education even at schools that do not offer a strong core curriculum.

Though Kansas State University receives a “C” rating from WWTL, the Primary Text Certificate prepares students with “the intellectual flexibility to be a lifelong learner” by emphasizing the study of original works, from Galileo and Einstein

to James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

“Too many students wander through their college years, sometimes at highly prestigious institutions, without the structure and mentorship that shapes intellect and character,” said ACTA President Michael Poliakoff. “By raising public awareness of excellent Hidden Gem programs, ACTA hopes that more students will benefit from an education of great and enduring value.”

ACTA President Speaks Out to Protect Due Process

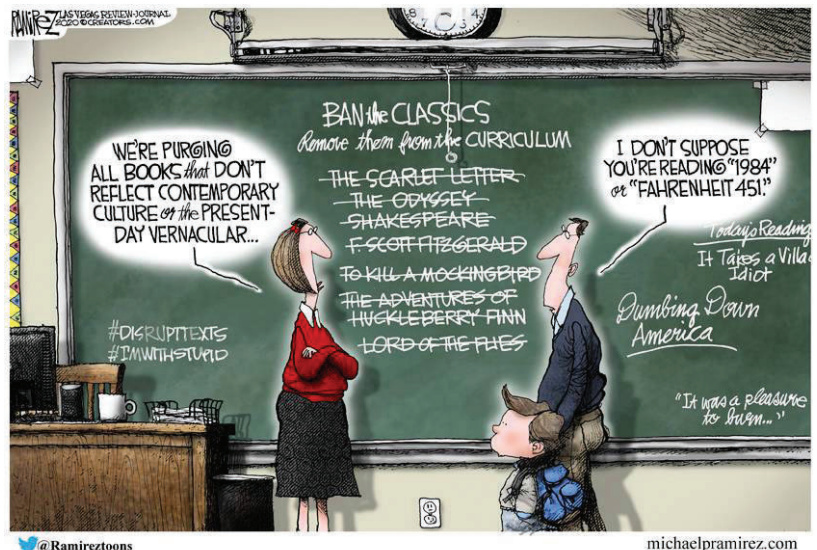
On January 25, Forbes.com published an article by ACTA President Michael Poliakoff entitled “The Biden Plan for Title IX Must Protect Due Process.” Dr. Poliakoff writes that Joe Biden must “reconsider his campaign promise to ‘return to and then build on’ the Obama administration’s Title IX policies,” which led to over 500 federal investigations for violations of due process and unjustly shattered an untold number of lives. “The victim of sexual assault is likely to bear

(continued on 6)

Bias Response Team Defeated, *continued from 2*

to ‘transmit their resulting views and conclusions to their elected representatives,’ ‘to influence the public policy enacted by elected representatives,’ and thereby to realize the political and human common good.”

It should not take a federal appeals court to force public universities to live up to their academic ideals and constitutional responsibilities. Boards, presidents, and alumni can all lead by focusing vigorously on our campus speech crisis and finding solutions. If they do not, the cases will keep coming. Visit our website to learn more about ACTA’s free speech campaign, including a similar case challenging the Bias Assessment and Response Team at the University of Illinois. ●



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ACTA Oases Offer Unique Opportunities to Students

ACTA is delighted to announce the addition of six new programs to our Oases of Excellence network. Oases of Excellence are academic programs on campuses across the country that promote the teaching of the best of the foundational arts and sciences—including American heritage, the Great Books, and free market economics—foster the free exchange of diverse ideas, and prepare students for informed citizenship.

The new programs include the **Phil Smith Center for Free Enterprise** in the College of Business at Florida Atlantic University; **Baylor in Washington**, a satellite program of Baylor University in Washington, DC; the **Thomas C. and Romano E. McDonald Center for America's Founding Principles** at Mercer University; the **Center for Catholic Thought and Culture** at Saint Vincent College; the **Abigail Adams Institute** at Harvard University; and the **John W. Altman Institute for Entrepreneurship** at Miami University. All six of these centers offer high-quality, rigorous academic

programming and prepare graduates to be well-informed citizens who can make meaningful contributions to their communities. The McDonald Center hosts an annual conference on the Great Books, reading groups, research fellowships, and a speaker series, with the aim to “revitalize cross-centuries dialogue about citizenship, human rights, and political, economic, and religious freedom.” The Phil Smith Center equips students with an extensive understanding of economics, finance, and marketing, while also emphasizing values such as integrity, respect, and accountability. The Altman Institute for Entrepreneurship offers a cross-disciplinary curriculum that integrates critical liberal arts skills with entrepreneurship and innovation.

As students and families make increasingly difficult decisions about where to direct their tuition dollars in hard times, attending institutions that house outstanding Oases of Excellence can ensure that they receive the best return on their investment. ●

Robert Frick Interview, *continued from 4*

I have a deep gratitude for what I was given as a student. Washington University gave me a full-ride scholarship for six years, for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, so I like to think of my giving as a “deferred tuition payment plan.” Actually, it turns out that the future value of that scholarship came to be about \$1.5 million, which was almost exactly what Barbara and I gave to endow the Robert and Barbara Frick Professorship in Business. In my opinion, there was an obligation to give back because my education at Washington University got me started in life, and I would not have had the success that I had without it.

As you moved away from supporting general operating funds, was there a philosophy that guided your major gifts?

There was an idea behind our gifts, and it was based on something that the prior chancellor of the school said to me on his first day on campus. He called the needs

of the school a three-legged stool, and that idea really stuck with me. A good school has excellent instructors, dedicated students, and attractive physical facilities. We intentionally gave to each of those legs over a period of about 15 years for projects that met both our interests and the school's needs.

What advice do you have for other philanthropists seeking to make a meaningful investment in higher education?

My best advice would be to find something that engages you. Conversations are vital to the giving process. If you are capable of providing meaningful funding, the university should be reaching out to you already. You can ask them, “What do you need?” “I’m not interested in that.” “Well, what do you really need?” “What else?” Feel free to engage in that dialogue and provide your own suggestions. Open conversations help you focus your interests and identify what you want to support that best fits the school's needs. ●

Heard on Campus, *continued from 5*

the emotional and psychological scars for years to come. It is a moral imperative for an institution of learning to protect students from the trauma that ensues. But the mirror image of that horror happens when an innocent person is unjustly found guilty of sexual assault and punished—typically by expulsion or long-term suspension—by his college. The reputational scars and career damage may last a lifetime. Due process provides a greater likelihood that punishment will fall on the guilty and not those wrongfully accused.”

By continuing to enforce the “Final Rule” signed by former U.S. secretary of education Betsy DeVos that provides strong protections for both alleged victims and the rights of the accused, President Biden can ensure that “innocent until proven guilty,” the cornerstone of our justice system, will continue to hold true on America's college campuses. ●

In Memoriam: Bruce M. Brown



We grieve the passing on December 18, 2020, of Bruce Maitland Brown, a friend of ACTA, a dedicated trustee, and a philanthropist whose oft-repeated motto was “Do all the good you can.” Born in 1947 in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, Mr. Brown funded 15 charities each year in the Philadelphia area.

An expert philanthropy consultant, he worked as vice president for charitable trusts at CoreStates Bank, now Wells Fargo, before establishing his own consultancy business in 1993, the Houston Brown Eldredge Foundation. He most recently served as a senior philanthropy consultant for Fiduciary Trust Company International. Earlier in his life, he worked for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and served as special assistant to the commissioner of public affairs and as deputy director for the press relations staff.

Deeply committed to service, Mr. Brown gave his time to others, in addition to his treasure. He volunteered for the Community Foundation of the City of Chester, the Hoxie Harrison

Smith Foundation, Delaware Valley Grantmakers, Hill Top Preparatory School, Presbyterian Children’s Village, the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, the Salvation Army, and the Capstone Legacy Foundation, among numerous other organizations.

In 2007, he was appointed as a trustee of Eastern University in St. Davids, PA. He also served as a trustee at Lawrence University, his alma mater, was a member of the Parents’ Executive Committee at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and was a member of the advisory board of the Center for Community Leadership and Entrepreneurship at Neumann University. He sought to share his knowledge of university stewardship with others, collaborating with ACTA on many projects, including our “Envisioning the Future of Higher Education” seminar in 2013 and our trustee video series in 2018.

Bruce Brown’s life and legacy serve as an inspiration to us, and we remember his guiding words: “I came to the conviction, given that most people in America today still do not have the opportunity to go to college and graduate from college, never mind graduate school, that it is not only a worthwhile enterprise, but that it is essential to the future of the country.” ●

ACTA Elects Three New Board Members

ACTA has welcomed three new distinguished leaders to our board of directors: Stuart Taylor, Jr., Mark Ridenour, and Judge Janice Rogers Brown. **Stuart Taylor, Jr.**, is an attorney, author, and award-winning journalist focusing on law, education, and social and political issues. He served as a reporter for the *Baltimore Sun* from 1971 to 1974, and his commentary on the Supreme Court, landmark cases, and culture have been featured in the *American Lawyer*, the *National Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *The Atlantic*. In 2002, he won a National Headliner Award, and he was nominated by the *New York Times* for a Pulitzer Prize in 1988. In 2007, Mr. Taylor joined with KC Johnson, ACTA’s 2009 recipient of the Philip Merrill Award, to write *Until Proven Innocent: Political Incorrectness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case*. In 2017, the two partnered again to write *The Campus Rape Frenzy: The Attack on Due Process at America’s Universities*.

Mark Ridenour served as chairman of the Miami University Board of Trustees, and before that as vice chair, treasurer, and committee chair. From 1985 to 2016, Mr. Ridenour was executive vice president and chief financial officer at the Heidtman Steel Company, and in 2015, he was named president of DALE Management Company in Sylvania,

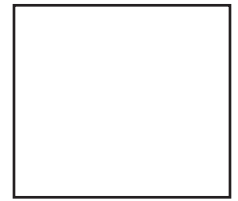
Ohio. He is deeply committed to assisting his community and bolstering education, serving on the boards of many nonprofits, including several parochial high schools, Lourdes University, the Toledo Zoological Society, and Mercy Health Partners. He is also the president of the Susan G. Komen Foundation’s Northwest Ohio Affiliate.

In 2003, **Janice Rogers Brown** was nominated by President George W. Bush to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and she was confirmed in 2005, serving until her retirement in 2017. Previously, she was associate justice of the Third District Court of Appeals in Sacramento and associate justice of the California Supreme Court. Over her esteemed career, Judge Brown has received many honors, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Georgetown University Chapter of the Federalist Society, the Jurisprudence Award from the Claremont Institute’s Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence, and the 2019 Bradley Prize.

All three of our new board members have demonstrated a powerful dedication to higher education, and ACTA looks forward to benefitting from their counsel as we advance academic excellence, defend academic freedom, and promote accountability at America’s colleges and universities. ●



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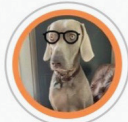
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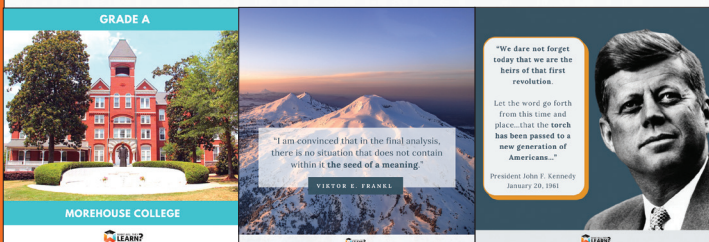
Student Info



Books&Pups



Trivia Tues...



ACTA IS ON INSTAGRAM!

In late October, ACTA launched a new Instagram page to showcase our **What Will They Learn?**[®] project. Daily posts center around liberal arts themes (the Great Books, historical figures, transformative events in history, and primary documents that tell America's story). We spotlight universities and academic programs around the country that are dedicated to excellence in liberal arts education. Our audience is growing fast, and we are looking forward to featuring a new collection of informational videos, college choice resources, and infographics in the coming months.

What Will They Learn?[®] is more than a college rating system. Our Instagram page is a place to build a community of high school and college students, homeschool families, educators, lifelong learners, and organizations committed to reading the Great Books and supporting a renaissance of classical learning. Visit us on Instagram at whatwilltheylearn to learn more. We hope you will consider joining us! ●

