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## ACTA Launches a Dynamic New Website for Trustees

College debt is placing a crushing burden on students and their families and continues to rise at an unsustainable rate, causing many concerned Americans to ask, “How are colleges spending their money?” At a public launch held at the National Press Club on January 30, ACTA released a

ACTA’s website is the only resource of its kind, providing metrics for nearly 1,500 schools. The tool is a catalyst for the kind of change that can increase the affordability of a college education. It will help trustees and policymakers perform their own analysis of higher education spending trends and create benchmarks to compare institutions.

The website’s easy-to-use interface allows visitors to compare the amount of money that colleges and universities spend on administration to the amount they spend on instruction. Our data is drawn from information reported by institutions to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated

Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Administrative costs are the funds that universities spend on the day-to-day operations of an institution, which include executive management, legal departments, and public relations. Instructional costs are the money that an institution spends on direct instruction, including faculty as well as academic support, comprising

*(continued on 2)*



ACTA’s Armand Alacbay, Diane Auer Jones, Tom McMillen, Hal Daub, James Toscano, and Jerry Malitz at launch of new website: [HowCollegesSpendMoney.com](http://HowCollegesSpendMoney.com).

new website that answers this question and empowers university leadership with the tools they need to ensure they are using their funds wisely and effectively.

[HowCollegesSpendMoney.com](http://HowCollegesSpendMoney.com) provides trustees, policymakers, alumni, and prospective students and their families with critical data on college spending, organized on an innovative, interactive platform.

## Save the Date for ATHENA Roundtable 2019!

Join ACTA on **October 18, 2019** to celebrate ACTA’s 15<sup>th</sup> annual ATHENA Roundtable Conference. The event will feature panels of prominent scholars on pressing issues in higher education, audience Q&A, and an evening dinner gala presentation of the **Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education**. More information to follow soon!

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

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1-888-ALUMNI-8

**Heidi Ganahl**

**Regent, University of Colorado**

“As I spent time on [HowCollegesSpendMoney.com](http://HowCollegesSpendMoney.com), ACTA’s new site, I was very impressed and just very excited about the opportunity to pull different levers and do different comparisons with peer institutions or different regions or conferences, and look at different metrics that could absolutely affect the cost of our institution’s degree programs, but also address this issue on a more national level. I think it’s going to be very impactful and make a big difference in how we approach our jobs as trustees and regents.”

**Bill C. Hardgrave**

**Provost and Senior Vice President, Auburn University**

“I am impressed with the breadth of ACTA activities and the great things you and your staff are doing for higher education. It was helpful for us to learn more about the What Will They

Learn?® initiative and we are already working on addressing the issues we covered during our meeting.”

**Jere W. Morehead**

**President, University of Georgia**

“Thank you for sending me a copy of ACTA’s latest *What Will They Learn?* report. I appreciate receiving this guide from your organization every year. As you might imagine, I was pleased to learn that the University of Georgia’s undergraduate curriculum once again received an ‘A’ rating.”

**Mary Ostrye**

**Former Provost, Ivy Tech Community College**

“. . . thank you once again for arranging the exchange between me and your senior staff . . . I’ve been reading the publications you sent with me, and it’s readily apparent you and your team are making significant contributions to higher education. You have reason to be proud of your accomplishments.”

**ACTA’s New Website on College Costs, *continued from 1***

academic deans, museums, and libraries. The website displays this relationship in an administrative vs. instructional costs ratio, for all 1,500 schools evaluated. For example, a college with a ratio of 0.25 spends 25 cents on administration for every dollar that it spends on instruction.

Using the information provided on ACTA’s website, including the administrative-to-instructional cost ratio, alumni and donors who make gifts to higher education can now better understand the spending choices of the institutions they support, which can inform their giving strategies. Prospective students and their families can compare tuition, graduation rates, and the amount institutions allocate toward instruction as they consider potential college options.

Many college and university trustees feel they lack a complete grasp of how their institution uses its funds, and how those choices affect important institutional goals like student outcomes,

accountability, and transparency. [HowCollegesSpendMoney.com](http://HowCollegesSpendMoney.com) will help ensure that trustees never enter the boardroom unprepared. Trustees and administrators can harness the benchmarking tools provided by the

administrative positions in multiple areas, and our Comparison Builder tool allows trustees to analyze side-by-side the spending practices of institutions in multiple Carnegie Classifications, athletic conferences, or membership associations.

University of Colorado Regent Heidi Ganahl explained the impact of the website: “ACTA’s new resource . . . is going to be a critical tool in our toolkit as regents and trustees to address the rising cost of college. We need all the information we can get, and being able to compare different universities or different conferences or look at it from all different perspectives is going to be incredibly helpful in our efforts to address this issue.”

To start using this new tool to tackle spending at your institution or to see how your alma mater directs its resources, take the tour of ACTA’s website at **[HowCollegesSpendMoney.com](http://HowCollegesSpendMoney.com)**. ●



website to see how the spending practices of their institution stack up with peer institutions, their states, and across the country. Our College Costs Calculator, for example, enables trustees to estimate how much it will cost to add new

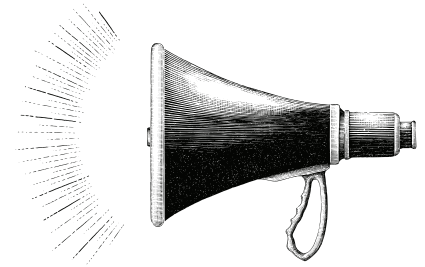
## Chicago Principles Find New Home at Christopher Newport University

ACTA is pleased to announce that Christopher Newport University (CNU) has recently adopted a new free speech policy based upon the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression. Seizing on a national trend, CNU has become one of 55 institutions across the nation to adopt a statement defending free speech modeled upon the Chicago Principles. Current CNU students Moriah Poliakoff and Rachel Wagner (who has interned with ACTA) played a crucial role in encouraging CNU's administration to adopt the free speech statement.

CNU is the only public university in the nation to receive a perfect "A" grade from ACTA's *What Will They Learn?* report for requiring all seven of the core subjects deemed by ACTA to make up

a foundational liberal arts education. At ACTA's 2017 ATHENA Roundtable, CNU President Paul Tribble delivered an impassioned address describing CNU's commitment to preparing students to lead lives of meaning, consequence, and purpose. By adopting the Chicago Principles, CNU signals to its entire campus community that freedom of expression is central to a rigorous liberal arts education that celebrates the free exchange of ideas and prepares students to be lifelong learners.

Nearly half of the 55 institutions that have adopted a free speech statement based on the Chicago Principles have done so with ACTA's guidance. And in 2018, 18 colleges and universities across the country endorsed a free speech



statement, the most of any year since the Chicago Principles were written in 2015. This exciting momentum shows that ACTA's steady work to urge schools to safeguard free expression and free inquiry in their policies and to encourage these values on their campuses is paying off. As we move through 2019, we will continue to urge more institutions to follow CNU's lead to protect the principles most vital to a rigorous liberal arts education and to uphold the legacy of the university as a true marketplace of ideas. ●

## New Website Grabs National Headlines

The public launch of **HowCollegesSpendMoney.com**, ACTA's new website, was held at the National Press Club on January 30. Its debut was attended by over 85 people, including journalists, representatives from higher education policy organizations, and several current and former college trustees.

The launch included a panel on the college cost crisis that featured **Diane Auer Jones**, Principal Deputy Under Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education; **Tom McMillen**, president and CEO of the LEAD1 Association and former U.S. Congressman; **James Toscano**, president of Partners for College Affordability and Public Trust; and **Hal Daub**, former U.S. Congressman and former regent at the University of Nebraska.

*Inside Higher Ed*, *Forbes*, the *Hechinger Report*, and many other news outlets reported on the release of ACTA's website. In an article titled "College spending comes under closer scrutiny," *Hechinger* praised HowCollegesSpendMoney.com as a tool

that "makes it easy to track how your hard-earned dollars are spent." *Forbes* called HowCollegesSpendMoney.com a "worthy addition to the empirical study of collegiate finances and education outcomes [that] offers policymakers, trustees, college administrators and faculty, and students and their families an

excellent way to assess institutions' real priorities and accomplishments."

ACTA's website is a wellspring of crucial data. It empowers users to understand how colleges and universities use

their resources with its hands-on comparison builder tools and ratios of administrative costs to instructional expenditures. By placing spending data side by side with information on student outcomes and financial aid, HowCollegesSpendMoney.com allows the public, policymakers, and college trustees to build a comprehensive view of spending priorities that will help guide higher education stakeholders to make wise budgetary decisions. ●

HOW COLLEGES  
SPEND MONEY 



# Presidential LEADERSHIP



## Meet Kenyon President Sean Decatur



On our podcast, **Higher Ed Now**, ACTA recently interviewed **Sean Decatur**, president of Kenyon College, one of the nation's most distinguished liberal arts colleges. President Decatur is a scientist by training, and previously taught biochemistry at Oberlin College and Mount Holyoke College. He

joined ACTA to discuss liberal arts education, effective college leadership, and how his science background influences his approach to liberal education.

The interview was inspired by an article that President Decatur wrote titled “Why a Liberal Arts Education Is a Game-Changer for Scientific Leadership.” Dr. Decatur argues that the dichotomy which is often imposed between science and the liberal arts is ill-advised, because mastery in science as well as in the humanities is essential for a well-rounded, liberal education. He points out that a successful scientist must possess

the adaptability, communication skills, and interpersonal understanding that a liberal arts education instills in students.

To provide students with a rigorous education that equips them with these critical skills, President Decatur explained, “College needs to be student-centered. The work of students should be at the center of all that we do . . . and I want to make a distinction. That’s not necessarily student directed.” ACTA agrees that it is the mission of college leadership and trustees to uphold a high-quality education that will launch students into meaningful careers and informed citizenship. We believe, as President Decatur remarked, “that in the end, institutions that focus on academic rigor and academic excellence will be the institutions to which students will travel.”

President Decatur stressed the fiduciary duties of trustees and how important it is that the board is committed to the over-arching purpose of a college or university: “the board [must] understand the mission of the institution, and be committed to the mission of the institution . . . and have a good understanding of how we evaluate the success of the mission. A board has to think about its fiduciary duty also in the context of performance. Are we achieving the larger mission and living up to the larger values that we stand for? I think that ACTA’s work in helping to give frameworks and information to trustees to think about those larger questions is important.”

Listen to the full podcast on [GoACTA.org](http://GoACTA.org). ●

## ACTA Meets with the Department of Education

In October, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff participated in a small meeting with Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Dr. Poliakoff spoke about ways the Department of Education can support religious institutions that are being pressured by accreditation agencies to violate their principles. Speaking before the Department of Education’s session on Negotiated Rule Making on Accreditation, President Poliakoff stated, “The concerns with the current system are numerous, and transcend partisan and ideological lines. In a moment when public confidence in higher education seems to be slipping, it has rarely been more important that quality assurance mechanisms function as they should. At the same time, it is crucial that institutional autonomy be protected, and that institutions are allowed to perform their missions as defined by their charters and boards of trustees.”

ACTA’s work to alert institutions and policymakers to the serious problems with the accreditation system is having a tremendous impact. In 2018, ACTA’s mobilization of university leadership—a partnership with Colorado Christian University, the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, and other faith-based institutions—led the Higher Learning Commission, an accreditor of institutions in 19 states, to remove language from its proposed guidelines that would have significantly curtailed the institutional autonomy of many colleges and universities. ●



# H E A R D C A M P U S O N

## No More History at Stevens Point

The University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point plans to cut faculty positions and six academic majors in order to reduce spending. The academic programs under the chopping block include history, geography, geology, French, German, and two art programs.

Eliminating critical liberal arts majors will not help the University solve its \$8 million deficit. Federal data analyzed by ACTA show that Stevens Point increased its administrative spending by 44% from 2011 to 2016; the university must take a hard look at its spending practices and take steps to rein in administrative spending.

But liberal arts programs must also re-evaluate the academic rigor of their majors. Many history programs, for example, have watered-down curriculum and lack the structure and critical analytical training that would make it difficult for an institution to consider dropping the major. History

programs must add course requirements that create connections between topics and build a comprehensive vision for the major so that students understand the benefits they can gain from history courses and institutions can recognize the value of preserving the history department.

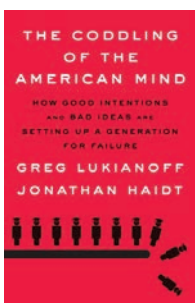
## What Should Happen to Chapel Hill Monument?

In the latest episode in the continuing controversy over a Confederate statue at University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, Carol Folt, chancellor of Chapel Hill, and Margaret Spellings, president of the University system, announced they will be leaving office. After protesters tore down the monument last year, university leadership struggled to address appropriately tensions over the fate of the statue. Chancellor Folt initially supported the idea of moving the statute to a new, on-campus history center. But the university system’s Board

of Governors rejected the proposal, insisting that the statue be restored to its former place at the center of campus.

In op-eds published in *The Federalist* and the *Raleigh News & Observer*, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff shared examples of successful efforts at other universities to reach workable compromises over controversial historical figures. At Princeton, Woodrow Wilson’s name continues to be part of the identity of the School of Public and International Affairs, but it is now accompanied by descriptions of the damage he inflicted on African Americans. And the University of Texas–Austin successfully relocated a statue of Jefferson Davis to a history center.

ACTA encourages the University of North Carolina to reach a similar compromise solution that both embraces and explains the complexity of history. ●



## The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure

by Greg Lukianoff & Jonathan Haidt

*The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*

is a must-read book by Greg Lukianoff, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, and Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist and Professor of Ethical Leadership at New York University’s Stern School of Business. It has its origins in a 2015 article of the same name that Mr. Lukianoff and Dr. Haidt published in *The Atlantic*. The authors originally titled the article “Arguing Towards Misery,” but editors rewrote the title to be more “succinct and provocative.” When the authors revisited the topic, they intended to title the

book “Disempowered,” but again, editors recommended that the phrase “coddling” be substituted to draw more attention and connect the work to their popular *Atlantic* article.

It’s not hard to see why the authors were skeptical of this title. Coddling has connotations of weakness and entitlement. But there is very little coddling in *The Coddling of the American Mind*. Instead, the authors seek to show how parents, educators, and our culture have unwittingly taught a generation of students to be anxious, depressed, and politically polarized. They do not seek to shame or condescend; but instead rationally to examine the problem.

The authors identify a series of “great untruths”; cognitive distortions which are at the core of our toxic political and online discourses. The solution offered would require hard work. The authors suggest that if our society seeks to identify and correct distortions in thought

(continued on 6)



## New Oases Promote Academic Inquiry

ACTA has inducted two new initiatives into our Oases of Excellence network: the Center for Academic and Intellectual Freedom at Northern Michigan University and the Center for Vision & Values at Grove City College. These two centers will join a group of over 66 programs at colleges and universities throughout the country that support the teaching of America's heritage, offer rigorous programs in the liberal arts, and encourage free inquiry into the full range of academic ideas.

Northern Michigan University's Center for Academic and Intellectual Freedom is committed to vigorous debate and disagreement as the foundation for intellectual growth and a liberal arts education. The Center promotes intellectual diversity and freedom of expression through podcasts, videos, and a speaker series. The speaker series has been

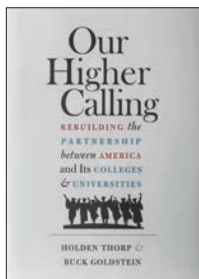
held with the cooperation of both College Republicans and College Democrats, and has featured talks by Tom Cushman, founder of the Freedom Project at Wellesley College, and Cary Nelson, former president of the American Association of University Professors.

The Center for Vision & Values at Grove City College offers many outstanding lectures and scholarship on the application of freedom to economic, political, social, religious, and scientific issues. The Center holds an Annual Ronald Reagan Lecture Series and an American Founders Luncheon Series.

ACTA is pleased to welcome these forums to our ever-growing network of brilliant academic programs and institutes. ●

### From the Bookshelf, *continued from 5*

through methods drawn from both Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Stoic philosophy, we can live better, wiser lives and raise better, wiser students. This may not be as simple as fighting a single ideology as "the enemy" and crusading to ensure its destruction, but that's the point of *The Coddling*: Just because a solution is not immediately satisfying does not mean it is not ultimately correct.



**Our Higher Calling: Rebuilding the Partnership between America and Its Colleges & Universities**  
*by Holden Thorp & Buck Goldstein*

In *Our Higher Calling: Rebuilding the Partnership between America and*

*Its Colleges & Universities*, co-authors Holden Thorp, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Washington University in St. Louis, and Buck Goldstein, professor in the Department of Economics at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, respond to some of the biggest challenges that American colleges and universities face and offer common sense advice for leaders in higher education.

Colleges and universities have long been a mainstay of American culture and business, yet public confidence in higher education has been eroding. Critics complain that colleges are too expensive, inadequately prepare students for the workplace and the voting booth, and are overly politicized. Mr. Thorp and Mr. Goldstein draw from decades of academic experience as well as interviews

with higher education thought leaders to offer an overview of these emerging issues and to provide practical advice for re-establishing trust in academia. They recommend that colleges innovate, rein in costs, and put teaching and research before administrative expenditures. The authors write, "Administration is a necessary evil at best. The university has to be operated—students have to be admitted, they need a place to live, faculty searches have to be done, and so on. But none of that is the true work of the university, which is done by students and faculty."

*Our Higher Calling* may feel like a review or survey for those with years of experience in academic leadership, but for new trustees and donors, it is a must-read in order to become familiar with the big-picture issues that are currently affecting America's higher education system. ●

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# ACTA Talks Free Speech at LibertyCon

At the 2019 Liberty Conference on January 18–19, ACTA’s Vice President of Trustee and Government Affairs Armand Alacbay gave a joint presentation with Professor Joyce Lee Malcolm, constitutional law professor at George Mason University.

Before an audience of students and professors, Mr. Alacbay and Professor Malcolm discussed how to build a culture of free expression at America’s colleges and universities, and the important role students can have in fostering this transformation. They urged students to communicate their concerns about the lack of free expression at their universities to trustees and other campus leaders. The discussion was followed by an engaging Q&A session. ACTA staff members held a table at the conference and spoke with many attendees about our *What Will They Learn?* and *No U.S. History?* reports, as well as our latest free speech publication, *Guarding the Freedom to Speak, Freedom to Hear*, which was produced in partnership with Professor Malcolm. Many attendees expressed concern about the lack of civic awareness among college students today, and were encouraged by ACTA’s work to increase the quality of civic education at America’s colleges and universities. ●

## We Can’t Afford to Lose the Liberal Arts



On our podcast, **Higher Ed Now**, ACTA recently interviewed **Fred Beuttler**, associate dean of the Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies at the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago has a rich tradition of promoting and cultivating the liberal arts. Mr. Beuttler discussed the deep imperative for colleges and universities to uphold the study of the liberal arts on their campuses.

**The purpose of the liberal arts:** “Former Dean of the College, F. Champ Ward, who helped oversee the University’s Basic Liberal Education for Adults program, looked at what the purpose of a liberal education is. He said that ‘Humans are born equal, but they are not born wise. Therefore, the business of liberal education in a democracy is to make free people wise.’ And that, to me, is the purpose of what we do. Ward said that in 1946, understanding very clearly the need for education for citizenship, to develop a wise people who are capable of self-governance.”

**The liberal arts and citizenship:** “If you go back to the purpose that Plato sees in [the liberal arts] in *The Republic*, it is self-governance. The liberal arts are for one’s own personal self-

governance. But in a democracy, it becomes even more essential that citizens are capable of governing themselves and seeing the broad picture—and the best way to do that is through a liberal arts education. You need literature, you need philosophy, you need history, because there are some really serious lessons that the American founding fathers understood, because they looked at what happened to Athenian democracy, the Roman Republic, the English Civil War, and they used those lessons to create the American Constitutional framework.”

**The liberal arts and lifelong learning:** “[There are] a couple of things to emphasize, especially in this context of changing aspects of higher education. One is the continuing part. We believe in a lifelong education. A liberal education needs to be that. And second is relation to professional education. So many people are moving into STEM fields, for example, for vocational reasons. But the breadth of a liberal arts education is one of the things that we can’t afford to lose . . . The essence of university education is that it is education for adults. It is voluntary. It is unlimited in scope, unlimited in age. It applies to one’s whole life.”

**The liberal arts broaden the mind:** “The skills that many people develop in their undergraduate and professional masters training is primary analytical. You pull things apart. The liberal arts in many ways is synthetic. You put things back together and see a broader picture in how one piece relates one to another. I like to use the phrase ‘critical and synthetic thinking.’ In our program, we have someone who’s an expert in finance, another who’s a retired tax lawyer, another who’s a doctor, another who is a very accomplished banker . . . They know their own fields, but they don’t know how to relate one to another, and that’s what a liberally educated individual can do . . . to think much broader and to understand your specialties, but then be able to put it together in the big picture to lead your organization or lead your family or lead your community.” ●



**ACTA**  
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF  
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

## INSIDE ACADEME

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## The Fund for Academic Renewal Welcomes New Executive Director



We are pleased to welcome **Dr. Ali Eskandarian** as the new Executive Director of ACTA's Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR). Dr. Eskandarian comes to FAR with an impressive background in building and supporting high-quality academic programs. He served for nearly seven years as dean of the College of Professional Studies

and the Virginia Science and Technology campus at George Washington University (GW). He oversaw the growth in enrollment of these two units and implemented the development of multiple master's degree programs, graduate certificates, and undergraduate degree completion programs.

Dr. Eskandarian is an accomplished professor and theoretical physicist whose research focuses on quantum theory, quantum computing/information, and astrophysics. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and also a Fellow of the Washington Academy of Sciences.

We look forward to benefitting from Dr. Eskandarian's vast experience as FAR works with higher education donors to foster academic renewal on America's college campuses. ●



FAR is accepting proposals from meritorious programs for the inaugural grants from its five special purpose funds. If you know of or lead a high-quality liberal arts program at a college or university that would benefit from receiving a grant, please contact **Joe DeGraff** at [jdegraff@AcademicRenewal.org](mailto:jdegraff@AcademicRenewal.org).