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ATHENA Roundtable 2016: Higher Education, Academic Freedom, and Civic Responsibility

Entering its third decade of hard-charging higher education reform, ACTA brought together a group of distinguished scholars and thought leaders for its

2016 ATHENA Roundtable Conference, "Higher Education, Academic Freedom, and Civic Responsibility," held on October 28 at the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

After opening reflections from ACTA's president, Dr. Michael Poliakoff, and from chairman of the board, Dr. Robert Lewit, the conference proceeded with two sessions, each including a spirited question-and-answer period.

Following an introduction by Dr. Kenneth Kolson, ACTA's vice president of policy, **KC Johnson**, professor of history at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, opened the

"Educating for Citizenship" panel. He chronicled the declining position of history in core curricula, using his own Brooklyn College as a case study.



Jonathan Haidt speaks at the ATHENA Roundtable Conference.

Eva Brann, longtime tutor and former dean of St. John's College, then discussed the relationship between rhetoric and good citizenship, noting that self-improvement in speech, leading to deeply meaningful communication, is the indispensable basis of a civic community.

Wilfred McClay, G.T. and Libby Blankenship Chair in the History of Liberty at the University of Oklahoma, then identified how universities' failure to invest in the serious study of history jeopardizes the equilibrium between progress and the past, which is essential for a society's sense of belonging (continued on 6)

New ACTA Survey Reveals Pervasive Civic Illiteracy

This fall, just days before Americans cast their ballots, ACTA released a new survey that revealed a disturbing lack of knowledge among college students about basic aspects of elections and governance in the United States. See page 5 of this issue for details of our findings.

www.GoACTA.org

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1-888-ALUMNI-8

**Larry Hogan, Governor
State of Maryland**

“[ACTA’s] resources are very informative for my staff as we work to solve issues in higher education. I have instructed my staff to review the analysis . . . and I commend the hard work of ACTA.”

**John Feaver, President
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma**

“Please know that I and my colleagues at USAO are extremely proud of the recognition that ACTA has conferred on the quality and content of this school’s core requirement program. We refer to ACTA’s recognition in all our marketing and public relations material. I can assure you, despite pressures on higher education to the contrary, we have no intention of pulling away from our commitment to provide a strong core experience for those who choose to enroll here.”

**Robert L. Freedman, Retired Partner
Dechert LLP
Philadelphia, PA**

“I very much enjoyed the recent ATHENA conference, including the talks and questions (and answers) in the morning.

Thank you for putting it on, and thank you for including the handout material. . . . The professionalism of these articles is quite impressive, and many of us are in your debt for sharing them.”

**Michael Maibach, Managing Director & Trustee
James Wilson Institute on Natural Rights and
the American Founding
Washington, DC**

“Congratulations on your superb, memorable Merrill Award dinner! Bravo! You gathered together people of integrity, accomplishment, and good will. . . . And, you focused us all on the great cause of saving Western Civilization—by first teaching its history and its majesty! . . . Thank you for seeking to place ‘the Flag of History’ on top of the nation’s highest towers!”

**Solveig Gold, Cofounder
Princeton Open Campus Coalition**

“I’ve just returned to Princeton . . . and I owe you a HUGE thank you. I had an absolutely wonderful time at ATHENA. I am so grateful to . . . ACTA for giving me the opportunity to be a part of such stimulating conversation.”

ACTA Launches Expanded College Donor Fund

Americans support higher education more generously than do the citizens of any other country: In 2015, they gave colleges and universities a record \$40.3 billion. But where is their money going? Just this September, when a University of New Hampshire librarian bequeathed his carefully amassed estate to the school, it chose to use \$1 million of the money for a new scoreboard in its football stadium.

Since ACTA’s founding, our **Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR)** has guided many alumni and other college donors in crafting gifts to fund programs that have enhanced academic quality and intellectual diversity on campuses across the country. On December 6, ACTA announced a major expansion of FAR, led by Executive Director Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill, who most recently served

as ACTA’s vice president of development. This expansion of FAR’s services is made possible by a generous grant from the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, whose sponsorship allows FAR to offer its advisory services without cost to donors.

“Writing a check to a college or university’s annual fund too often preserves the status quo and encourages more of the same weaknesses that erode confidence in American higher education. Our intention is to provide donors with an alternative: an opportunity carefully and thoughtfully to craft gifts that will make a real difference,” Dr. Merrill said. “The Fund for Academic Renewal will work with donors who want change, who value academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas, and who believe that academic standards must not be compromised.”



Learn more at
AcademicRenewal.org

FAR can help donors identify specific campus programs and activities that merit support; create proposals in collaboration with college faculty and other campus leaders; ensure gifts are structured so there are no ambiguities about intent; and monitor the implementation and success of gifts. To learn more about FAR or to begin a conversation about planning a gift to a college or university, visit AcademicRenewal.org, call 202/467-6787, or email info@AcademicRenewal.org. ●

Trustees and Policymakers Take Notice of ACTA's Project on Administrative Costs

Since 1985, the cost of college tuition has grown more than 500%, nearly five times the rate of the Consumer Price Index. Just where is this money going? Building upon its *Getting What You Pay For?* and *Education or Reputation?* reports, ACTA recently launched the **Project on Administrative Costs** to investigate this issue. The project has already gained the attention of numerous colleges, universities, and state officials.

Using the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), ACTA reviewed the financial data reported to the federal government by over 1,150 four-year, not-for-profit colleges and universities between 2009 and 2014. Partnering with Jerry Malitz, a key developer of the U.S. Department of Education's IPEDS and College Navigator systems, as well as a recent guest on ACTA's Higher Ed Now podcast, ACTA identified institutions where significant growth in administrative costs occurred, outpacing that of instructional expenditures.

In September, ACTA sent customized letters to nearly 60

boards of trustees at institutions with high administrative expense growth relative to their peers, along with charts highlighting the comparison with the expenditures of their respective peers. In one case, the board of a major state flagship university learned that its 45% jump in administrative expense—accompanied by a

mere 7% increase in instructional costs—was the highest among institutions in the Big 12 Conference. In another, the board of a private university ranked among *U.S. News & World Report's* Top 25 Regional Colleges in the South received a letter urging it to ask questions regarding its 76% growth in administrative costs.

Trustees have taken notice. Only a few days passed before ACTA's office began fielding phone calls from chief financial officers

and other institutional research staff seeking ACTA's guidance as boards called on their administrative leaders to explain ACTA's findings. Several state institutions, as well as some major private research universities, are among the more than a dozen institutions that have started investigating their administrative costs as a result of ACTA's work.

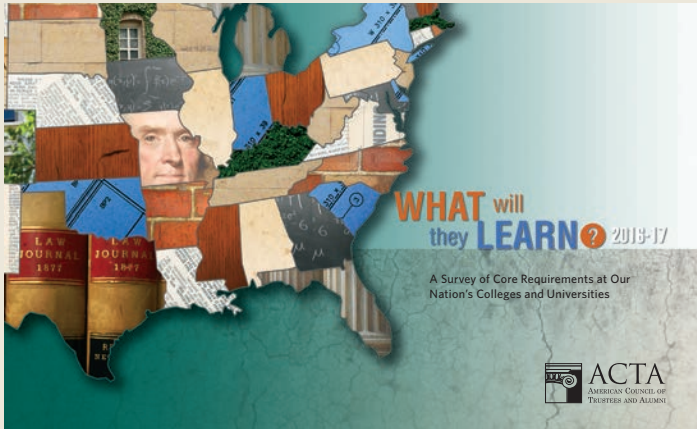
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College Costs by Eric Callie, CAGLEARTOONS.COM.

Trustees have taken notice. Only a few days passed before ACTA's office began fielding phone calls from chief financial officers and other institutional research staff seeking ACTA's guidance as boards called on their administrative leaders to explain ACTA's findings.

ACTA's College Ratings Make a Splash



This fall, both the *Washington Times* and *USA Today* reported on ACTA's signature project, highlighting the What Will They Learn?TM initiative's newest findings.

The report surveyed every major public and most private four-year institutions in the country—over 1,100 in total. Drawing on material from publicly-available course catalogues and federal data, ACTA's guide evaluates how many of the following seven core subjects are required by each school: Composition, Literature, Intermediate-level Foreign Language, U.S. History or Government, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural Science.

This year's results were rather dismal. In the age of globalization, less than 13% of schools require the study of a foreign language at the intermediate level. Even though the First Amendment has come under fire on campuses, less than 18% of schools require a foundational course in U.S. history or government. While the economy remains a top concern for many Americans, only 3% of colleges require the study of economics. And with so many local and national leaders promoting the importance

of STEM education, fewer than two-thirds of schools require college-level math. Only 25 schools require even six of these seven basic subjects.

So what *are* students learning? At the University of Colorado–Boulder, students can fulfill the “United States Context” requirement by taking “Horror Films and American Culture.” At UCLA, students can fulfill the “Arts and Humanities” requirement with “Aliens, Psychics, and Ghosts.” At Western Illinois University, courses such as “Food and Culture” and “Global Social Networks” can stand in for foreign language proficiency.

It is no wonder, then, that so many recent graduates emerge underprepared for career and citizenship, often unemployed or underemployed. Fully 78% of employers, when surveyed, agree that “every college student should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences,” and over 70% of employers agree that today's graduates are not well-prepared in skills such as “written communication,” “working with numbers/statistics,” and “critical/analytical thinking.”

Increasingly, education leaders are beginning to recognize this reality and are taking action. This year, ACTA reached out to over 5,400 high school guidance counselors, to an overwhelmingly positive response. We added two institutions to the list of “A” schools, which require either six or seven of the core subjects—Saint Katherine College and the United States Merchant Marine Academy. And ACTA's curricular improvement team has been contacted by nearly 30 schools seeking technical assistance in strengthening their general education programs.

For nearly a decade, ACTA's emphasis on the revitalization of a shared core has made an ever-growing impact. See how *your* alma mater fares on WhatWillTheyLearn.com, or order a copy of the guide at GoACTA.org. ●

ACTA Featured in *The Atlantic*

This year, ACTA's research reports have garnered news coverage across the country, including stories in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*, as well as in hundreds of state and regional papers. Our findings are making an impact in the public square! Most recently, ACTA made an appearance in *The Atlantic*, in a lengthy article titled “Ignorance Does Not Lead to Election Bliss.” The author, Jonathan R. Cole, is the John Mitchell Mason Professor at the University of Columbia University. He also is Columbia's former provost and dean of faculties, as well as an esteemed signatory of ACTA's 2014 report, *Governance for a New Era*. In the piece, Professor Cole details how one of the “causes for the current American political situation . . . is the relative ignorance of basic American history, scientific, technological knowledge, and . . . ‘civics’ among a large sector of our population.” In his analysis, this ignorance prevents many voters from casting informed ballots, even if they think otherwise. In a 2009 study, 89% of participants believed they would pass a test of foundational historical knowledge; 83% then failed.

To bolster his case, Professor Cole cites two of ACTA's most recent publications, *A Crisis in Civic Education* and *No U.S. History? How College History Departments Leave the United States out of the Major*. As these reports show, colleges and universities' lax curricular requirements are a major cause of gaps in graduates' knowledge.

ACTA has long been on the front lines of the fight to restore academic excellence to American higher education. To read Professor Cole's article or other ACTA-related coverage in full, please visit GoACTA.org. ●



Oases of Excellence Celebrate Constitution Day

Higher education today faces many challenges, but there are also bright spots: ACTA's directory of Oases of Excellence features more than 50 programs at colleges and universities across the country that promote the study of essential but often neglected topics, including the American founding, Western Civilization, military history, economics, capitalism, and Great Books. This September, to commemorate the 229th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution, many of these programs held events to foster understanding of our country's founding principles on college campuses.

The Alexander Hamilton Institute and Skidmore College's Benjamin Franklin Forum cosponsored the Ninth Annual David Aldrich Nelson Lecture in Constitutional Jurisprudence, which featured Pepperdine Professor Gordon Lloyd's talk on "Fifty Ways to Love Your Framers." Louisiana State University's Erik Voegelin Institute hosted Professor Hadley Arkes, director of Amherst College's Colloquium on the American Founding and the James Wilson Institute, for its Constitution Day lecture on "Justice Scalia and the Ground of Law." And the University of Missouri's Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy invited University of Michigan Associate Professor of Political Science Mariah Zeisberg to deliver a lecture on "U.S. Imperialism and the Separation of Powers."

These were just a few of the events that Oases held to observe Constitution Day. ACTA was encouraged to see so many Oases host robust events to reinvigorate the study of America's first principles. ●

Survey Finds Civic Illiteracy Prevalent

On the heels of the startling findings of our 2015 Constitution Day survey, which revealed that 10% of Americans believe that Judith Sheindlin—better known as TV's Judge Judy—is a U.S. Supreme Court justice, ACTA commissioned a survey by the polling firm GfK on electoral and economic literacy just before the 2016 election.

ACTA's newest findings are just as shocking. Even as 97% of college-educated Americans affirm the importance of understanding the electoral process, far too many display a troubling ignorance of the public officials and institutions central to meaningful participation in this process.

Given a multiple choice format, fully 37% of Americans overall and 22% of college graduates could not correctly identify when Election Day is held. 31% of Americans and 13% of college graduates could not correctly define the Electoral College. And more than one in four Americans—including 15% of college graduates—were unable to identify

vice presidential candidate Tim Kaine.

While these results are dismal across the board, recent college graduates, aged 18–34, fared especially poorly. 23% of recent graduates did not know in which time period the Great Depression occurred, compared to 14% of those at least 35 years old. 50% were unable to name FDR as the last president to win more than two elections to the presidency, compared to 32% of older graduates. And 56% could not name Janet Yellen as the chair of the Federal Reserve System, compared to just 26% of older graduates.

Recent graduates' civic illiteracy reflects a failing of America's institutions of higher education: By hollowing their core curricula, they have stripped students of the shared understanding of the history and institutions that underlie American democracy. Just 18% of schools require their students to take a course in U.S. history or government, and only 3% require a course in economics.

Through What Will They Learn?TM,

ACTA's survey found that:

- **22%** of college graduates could not correctly identify when Election Day is held.
- **13%** of college graduates could not correctly define the Electoral College.
- **15%** of college graduates could not correctly identify Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Kaine.

ACTA is working hard to reverse this trend. "The Framers were emphatic that an informed citizenry is a crucial precondition for the American republic's survival," explained ACTA President Michael Poliakov. "Colleges and universities should take note: Unless we take greater care in educating students, the deficit in civic literacy will weaken the next generation's ability to engage in the democratic process and political discourse." ●

ATHENA Roundtable 2016 (cont'd)

Conference at Dirksen Senate Office Building



Eva Brann



Wilfred McClay



Audience Participants at ATHENA Roundtable 2016



Solveig Gold, Gail Heriot, and Ruth Wisse



KC Johnson

and devotion to the common good.

Jonathan Haidt, Thomas Cooley Professor of Ethical Leadership at the NYU Stern School of Business and cofounder of the Heterodox Academy, began the second session—a colloquy on academic freedom entitled “**Free to Teach, Free to Learn.**” Professor Haidt discussed the nature of the two schools of academe, one rooted in viewpoint diversity and one rooted in single-minded pursuit of social justice—two incompatible visions of intellectual life. Drawing on his background in social psychology, he argued that the clash between these approaches drives conflict on campus and undermines the quality of scholarship and learning.

Citing her own experiences, **Ruth Wisse**, Martin Peretz Professor of Yiddish

Literature and Comparative Literature Emerita at Harvard University, then assessed the politicized “campus culture of pusillanimity.” She explained that some students “cannot be educated,” as they closed-mindedly call for “courses to conform to [their] convictions and for the universities to impose those convictions on the curriculum.”

Gail Heriot, professor of law at the University of San Diego School of Law and member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, urged the audience to look past the symptoms of collegiate malaise to its root cause: destructive institutional incentives. She argued that the illiberal mindset of faculty and administrators inevitably trickles down to students, producing the rash of speaker disinventions and suppression of free

expression seen today.

Finally, Princeton senior **Solveig Gold** described her work as cofounder of the Open Campus Coalition, which pushed back against the Black Justice League’s demands at Princeton, among them a call for the erasure of Woodrow Wilson’s name from campus. The Coalition leaders’ open letter and media appearances galvanized attention both on campus and nationally to the idea that the right to free speech is not abstract; it “protects a concrete intellectual good—the accumulation of knowledge in pursuit of the truth.”

ACTA continues to lead on these challenging issues, and is grateful for the insights of its ATHENA panelists and participants. View the full conference on GoACTA.org/higher_ed_now/athena_roundtable_2016. ●

Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Niall Ferguson Receive Merrill Award

After robust discussion at the ATHENA Roundtable conference, ACTA held its gala celebration at the Folger Shakespeare Library to honor Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Niall Ferguson, the 2016 winners of the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education.

The assembled audience numbered over 160 and included several courageous student leaders from programs including the William F. Buckley, Jr. Program at Yale, the Alexander Hamilton Institute, and the Princeton Open Campus Coalition. The students' presence highlighted the synergy between ACTA and

crucial undergraduate programs; indeed, ACTA donor, sponsor, and board treasurer Carl Menges serves as a founding board member of the Alexander Hamilton Institute.

Gala guests were welcomed by **Michael Poliakoff**, ACTA's president. **Abby Moffat**, CEO of the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, spoke with passion about the newly expanded Fund for Academic Renewal, made possible by the Foundation's support. And **Cathy Merrill Williams**, publisher of *Washingtonian*, explained the history of the Merrill Award, which honors her father, a distinguished philanthropist and college trustee.

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Presentation of Merrill Award at the Folger Shakespeare Library



Niall Ferguson with Student Leaders from Princeton, Yale, and Hamilton



Abby Moffat



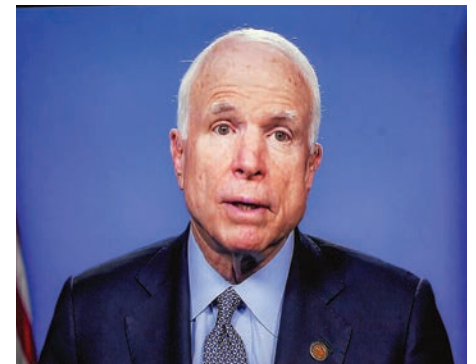
Christina Hoff Sommers



Ayaan Hirsi Ali (by video)



Niall Ferguson



Senator John McCain (by video)



Robert Zoellick



Louise Mirrer

Merrill Award Presentation (cont'd)

Four distinguished speakers then paid tribute to Ms. Hirsi Ali and Dr. Ferguson's remarkable, courageous contributions to the defense of academic freedom and the study of Western Civilization on college campuses: U.S. Senator **John McCain**, American Enterprise Institute Resident Scholar **Christina Hoff Sommers**, former World Bank President **Robert Zoellick**, and New-York Historical Society President and CEO **Louise Mirror**.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a fellow of the Future of Democracy Project at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and former elected member of the Dutch Parliament, has remained steadfast in her commitment to protecting the rights of Muslim women and ending the practice of honor violence and domestic abuse, even in the face of a fatwa calling for her death.

In her acceptance speech, delivered

by video, she highlighted the importance of Western Civilization and lamented its declining presence in college curricula, as well as the concomitant decline in



Michael Poliakoff, Niall Ferguson, and Cathy Merrill Williams

viewpoint diversity in classrooms. She contrasted academe's preoccupation with Western Civilization's shortcomings with its unwillingness to offer any similar analy-

sis for the dangers of radical Islam.

In his speech, Niall Ferguson, a senior fellow of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and award-winning author, cited a "troubling paradox" in the success of the Broadway musical *Hamilton*: "For even as history smashes the box office, it slumps where it should be best protected and promoted—at our universities." Chronicling this decline, he emphasized not only the flagging numbers of history majors, but the reduced quality of course offerings, with niche topics replacing ones of real substance. Dr. Ferguson called upon trustees and alumni to restore the meaningful study of history to its rightful place in the curriculum.

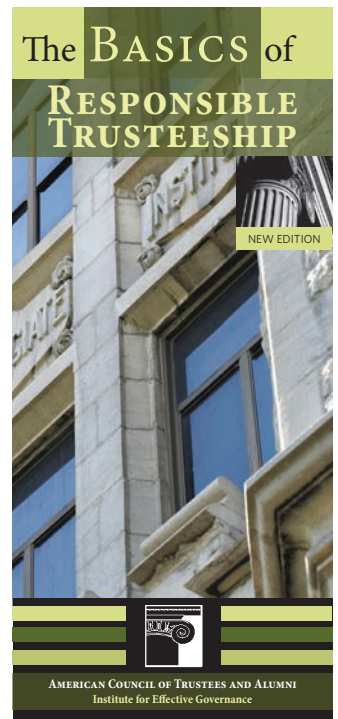
The couple's charges add inspiration to ACTA's work, and ACTA was honored to present them with the 12th annual Merrill Award. ●

ACTA Releases New Edition of Trustee Guide

In December 2015, ACTA began including publication request forms with its mailings, to provide its network of more than 21,000 college and university trustees with the information most helpful to them. And the requests have come pouring in, especially for *The Basics of Responsible Trusteeship* guide, an important publication for conscientious trustees. So ACTA went to work updating the booklet, first published in 2002.

Created under the guidance of Armand Alacbay, ACTA's vice president of trustee and legislative affairs, the new edition adds important examples for consideration and incorporates several of ACTA's recent research findings and initiatives. It particularly draws from the insights of the blue-chip *Governance for a New Era* report, which was signed by a bipartisan group of 22 civic and education leaders, chaired by then-City University of New York board chair and past Yale University president, Benno Schmidt, and distributed by ACTA in August of 2014.

The Basics of Responsible Trusteeship is a valuable starting point for trustees, who are at their best when they are engaged guardians of the public interest. And through its Institute for Effective Governance, ACTA stands ready to assist trustees to fulfill this mission. See ACTA's entire roster of trustee guides at GoACTA.org. ●





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

University of Chicago Leads on Free Speech

While many other colleges remain silent, the University of Chicago has once again been a leader in the fight to protect free expression on campus. Undergraduate Dean of Students John Ellison welcomed the class of 2020 in an August letter, in which he affirmed the university's commitment to freedom of inquiry and robust debate, as well as its rejection of so-called trigger warnings, intellectual safe spaces, and speaker disinvitations.

The University of Chicago's approach reflects the conclusions of its 2015 Report of the Committee on Free Expression, commonly known as the "Chicago Principles." Among these principles is the declaration that: "Debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission." ACTA has urged its network of over 21,000 trustees at over 1,250 schools to follow the University of Chicago's lead, and already, nearly 20 schools, including Princeton, Purdue, and Johns Hopkins, have adopted the Chicago Principles or a similar statement as their own. ACTA commends these institutions and urges more schools to follow.

UNC Takes One Step Forward, One Step Back

In September, ACTA praised the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) for eliminating its Bias Response Team (BRT), at the urging of ACTA and other organizations. The BRT had been on a dangerous path of restricting the freedom of faculty to address challenging topics and the freedom of students to explore, rather than avoid, the controversies of the day. Even a discussion of ACTA friends Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt's article, "The Coddling of the American Mind," published in *The Atlantic*, was too provocative for the BRT!

After announcing its closure, UNC President Kay Norton professed a commitment to free speech in her 2016 State of the University Address. Unfortunately, UNC then returned to other, troublingly illiberal policies. An October news report found that at least five recent sociology syllabi featured warnings declaring that gender-neutral language was required and that "it is *not* appropriate to make personal statements about faith at any time." On issues of academic freedom and free speech, UNC has a long way to go.

Hamilton Establishes a Diversity Requirement

Hamilton College is one of roughly 10% of schools nationwide to earn an "F" in ACTA's What Will They Learn?TM survey. With its "open curriculum," it does not require students to take any of the subjects ACTA has identified as essential for students to graduate well-prepared for career and citizenship. Students can go four years without studying composition, mathematics, and foreign language, among other topics. But, beginning this fall, they have a new requirement: Faculty at Hamilton College bowed to student protestors' demands and passed a new diversity requirement. All students, in all majors, must complete coursework that centers on diversity, although it remains unclear how this is to be operationalized, especially in majors like math and lab sciences.

Such a mandate may placate protestors, but it fails both faculty and students. Faculty may now be pushed outside of their areas of expertise, lowering the quality of the courses offered. And students are still left without an intermediate-level foreign language requirement, by far the best method of providing authentically diverse, multicultural educations in an increasingly interconnected world. ●

Project on Administrative Costs, *continued from 3*

And board actions are leading to results in accountability. After an internal review of its finances prompted by ACTA's letter to its board, one large state university learned that it had misreported its institutional support expenditures to the Department of Education during a recent fiscal year. And the president of another state's multi-campus system wrote a letter to ACTA thanking us for calling attention to disproportionate administrative expenditures at one of its branch campuses, acknowledging that "[o]ur attention must always be on continuous improvement in this area."

ACTA also wrote to state governors and legislative leaders across the country regarding the spending and tuition trends at their states' four-year institutions. The governors of Maryland, Oregon, and Oklahoma have acknowledged ACTA's work, with the office of Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin indicating that the data will be useful in helping craft next year's state higher education budget.

And ACTA is not done yet: As 2017 approaches, we are developing more detailed guidelines for trustees on the customary ratios of administrative to instructional expenditures. ACTA continues to lead in the fight for accountability at colleges and universities. ●

This fall, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni has been taking our work to foster academic freedom, academic excellence, and accountability on the road. Here are a few of the stops:

On September 19, Kara Brounstein, program officer for trustee affairs, met with senior administrators of Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN, including Purdue president and former Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels. She received an inside look into the university’s array of groundbreaking strategies to strengthen academic quality and efficiency, allowing it to freeze its tuition for five straight years—a model for other schools to follow.

Later that week, on September 23, President Michael Poliakoff spoke at the City Commons Club in Berkeley, CA, at a luncheon discussion hosted by ACTA supporter Morton McDonald. Dr. Poliakoff’s presentation, “Looking at American Higher Education,” highlighted

ACTA’s work to combat the many dismal trends in higher education. Concurrent with his talk, *City Journal* published his op-ed on UC–Berkeley’s financial troubles and the path forward.

The next month, on October 6, Armand Alacbay, ACTA’s vice president of trustee and legislative affairs, presented to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at its 2016 LEAD Conference, “Educating for Eternity,” in Silver Spring, MD. Before a group of nearly 500 attendees, including many college and university trustees, he outlined the problems of the current higher education accreditation system and ACTA’s work to develop an alternative path to Title IV eligibility, an idea to which many attendees were highly receptive.

On October 13 and 14, Mr. Alacbay traveled to Richmond, VA, to attend an in-depth workshop on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) cohosted by the Association

for Institutional Research and the Virginia Association for Management Analysis & Planning. The Richmond program focused on the financial records cataloged by IPEDS, which is the U.S. Department of Education’s primary repository for higher education data and a tool frequently utilized by ACTA, particularly for our ongoing Project on Administrative Costs.

And on the same dates, Eric Bledsoe, director of curricular improvement and academic outreach, represented ACTA at the 2016 Jefferson Symposium on Free Speech on Campus in Charlottesville, VA, sponsored by the University of Virginia’s Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression. The conference featured discussions of the importance of free speech and of its current standing on the college campus, topics central to ACTA’s work and mission. ●

Coast to Coast: Evenings with ACTA

In recent months, ACTA has held gatherings for supporters in Washington, DC; Berkeley, CA; and New York, NY. An August event in the nation’s capital featured Thomas Mallon, professor of English at George Washington University and the acclaimed author of books that include *Henry and Clara* and *Finale: A Novel of the Reagan Years*. At the dinner, Mr. Mallon spoke about *Finale* and about the current state of American higher education.

Then, in September, ACTA held a dinner in San Francisco for some of its closest friends on the West Coast. At the dinner, President Michael Poliakoff updated the group on some of our latest initiatives and successes, with an eye towards safeguarding intellectual diversity, free speech, and academic rigor.

Returning to the East Coast, ACTA held an event at the Nailya Alexander Gallery in New York City, where attendees toured Bill Meyers’s remarkable photography exhibit, “Civics,” which focuses on the ways that we, as individual citizens, involve ourselves in civic processes, confront the symbols, and participate in the ceremonies that define American democracy. Mr. Meyers also spoke graciously of his support for ACTA.

ACTA is fortunate to have great friends across the country that both host and support us—we thank them for all they do! ●



Tom Mallon, Bill Bodenschatz, and Michael Barone at an ACTA donor salon in DC.

Featured Donor: Morton McDonald

For ten years now, ACTA has benefitted tremendously from the support of Morton McDonald, who has been a tireless advocate for ACTA and for the broader cause of higher education reform. Mr. McDonald worked for many years, alongside both his father and his son, with Roy McDonald Associates, Inc., a longtime family-owned advertising sales and consulting company based in Oakland, California.

A 1951 graduate of Stanford University, Mr. McDonald has deep roots in the Golden State. And he has been one of ACTA's most engaged backers: He has twice invited ACTA to his meetings at the City Commons Club, in Berkeley, to introduce us to new audiences on the West Coast. Most recently, when President Michael Poliakoff spoke at the Club in September, Mr. McDonald assembled a packed room of listeners, including many people who had never previously heard of ACTA!

ACTA is always working to expand its network of supporters and allies, and we are grateful for Mr. McDonald's continued support of our cause and the opportunities he gives us on the West Coast. ●



New Faces at ACTA

This year, as ACTA expands its role on the forefront of the fight for higher education reform, we have welcomed several new staff members to our team. In June, **Danielle Jack** came aboard as the program associate for trustee affairs, assisting with trustee research, outreach, and communications.

In July, **Dominique Ornelas**, **Nick Barden**, **Alexis Zhang**, and **Kenneth Kolson** joined the team. Dominique is the program associate for development, working on donor research and outreach initiatives. Nick is ACTA's new administrative director, organizing our administrative procedures and

events, including the ATHENA Roundtable. Alexis is now ACTA's research associate and editor, managing the quality

control process and contributing research and writing. And Ken, as vice president of policy and programs, oversees ACTA's programming and publications, including the signature What Will They Learn?TM project.

In August, **Ted Eismeier** became the director of communications, guiding our messaging and media placement strategies. These additions

round out ACTA's growing team, and we are happy indeed to have them here! ●



New staff members Nick Barden, Danielle Jack, Dominique Ornelas, Ted Eismeier, Alexis Zhang, and Ken Kolson.

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From our house to yours, we wish you a joyous holiday season and a New Year filled with hope.

Thank you for your support,
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