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Athletics and Academic Excellence

When yet more shocking details of the athletics scandal at UNC Chapel Hill broke this past fall, ACTA was with the *New York Post* in declaring that it wasn't really about athletics at all—it was all about empty degrees. ACTA president Anne Neal made a statement to that effect, calling on the UNC governing board to heed the warnings of the recent, pioneering report *Governance for a New Era*: “Trustees cannot and should not expect participants in this multi-billion-dollar industry to police themselves.”

Although UNC has much work ahead, that warning didn't fall on deaf ears. At several schools around the country, concerned fiduciaries have taken steps to rein in college athletics and get back to the central purpose of academe: to educate, rather than to entertain.

Particularly promising is the plan put forward by University System of Maryland regent and former U.S. Representative, Tom McMillen, to tie coaches' pay to the academic performance of players. McMillen has been a long-time ally of ACTA and was one of the 22 signatories to the *Governance for a New Era* report. The University of Maryland's full board approved the policy this past October, after unremitting effort on McMillen's part. As a member of the 1972 U.S. Olympic basketball team, Rhodes Scholar, and former professional basketball player, he brings vast expertise to issues of college athletics.

For this effort and others, the *Washington Business Journal* and the National Association of Corporate Directors honored McMillen with an Outstanding Directors

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Maryland regent Tom McMillen and chancellor Brit Kirwan discuss best practices in athletic oversight in a new ACTA web video, part of our Higher Ed Now online resource, with an introduction by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

Register Now for ACTA's 20th Anniversary Gala!

Join us in celebrating two decades of hard-charging higher education reform! The event begins with a dynamic afternoon discussion with distinguished civic and education leaders and is followed by a cocktail reception and gala dinner culminating in the presentation of the 2015 Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. **See the registration form inside or visit GoACTA.org/anniversary for further details.**

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**Mr. Jonathan J. Stein, Trustee
Northeastern Illinois University**

“Thank you for the *Bold Leadership, Real Reform: Best Practices in University Governance* publication. I have discussed these and similar broad goals of academic excellence and cost savings with our President. ... Your leadership and work are greatly appreciated.”

**Dr. John O. Hunter
Hornell, NY**

“Congratulations on splendid 2014 report, *Bold Leadership, Real Reform!* You and your colleagues have indeed given ACTA a ‘prophetic role.’ So encouraging after a long period of decline in our higher education values you can provide a much needed effort to restore excellence as a guiding principle in our academic communities.”

**Dr. Douglas Bradburn, Founding Director
The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of
George Washington at Mount Vernon**

“That the ‘totality of the American experience’ is founded on the principles defended in the Revolution and established in the Constitution is something I have always advocated and believed. Great to see the shared sentiment.”

**Mr. Bruce M. Gans, former Professor of English
Chicago, IL**

“I got sick when I saw the headline [Top Universities Drop Shakespeare Requirements] and then was grateful that you managed to lift the rock under which this scandal festers.”

**Mr. Morton C. Blackwell, President
The Leadership Institute
Arlington, VA**

“Thank you for your presentation at our April Wednesday Wake-Up Club Breakfast. Our guests enjoyed hearing you speak and are deeply appreciative of the work your organization is doing to oversee the governance and high academic standards for American universities.”

**The Honorable Janice Rogers Brown, Trustee
Pepperdine University**

“Thankfully, ACTA has ... succeeded in making ‘an informed understanding of the traditions and institutions of our Western civilization’ a bit less rare. ... The ideals of liberal democracy cannot survive without citizens fit for the challenge. That is why I, along with many other like-minded trustees, applaud and celebrate ACTA’s victories in the fight for meaningful civic education.”

Athletics and Academic Oversight, continued from 1

Award. ACTA had nominated McMillen for his exemplary trustee service, and we were delighted at his selection. One would be hard-pressed to find a more deserving board member. During his tenure, Maryland has demonstrated leadership in active governance, enacting high-impact reforms focused on accountability and cost-control.

ACTA is working to help dedicated trustees replicate McMillen’s success at colleges and universities nationwide. In May, we launched **Higher Ed Now**, a new online resource aimed at guiding trustees through difficult decisions and promoting the adoption of best practices.

This program currently offers a podcast series and a brand new web video series, both available at www.GoACTA.org. In

“The work [ACTA’s] doing is absolutely vital to raising awareness on an issue that still doesn’t get the attention it needs and deserves. Today’s discussion is a positive step forward in ensuring we’re striking the right balance between academics and athletics in college sports.”

– Secretary of Education Arne Duncan
“Higher Ed Now: Best Practices in Athletic Oversight”

March, ACTA released the first podcast segment, “Higher Ed Now: Governance for a New Era,” which helped trustees

turn the recommendations of *Governance for a New Era* into action items.

Then in May, ACTA’s web series for trustees debuted with “Higher Ed Now: Best Practices in Athletic Oversight.” The video presents best practices on the critical issue of oversight in college athletics. After an introduction by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who calls ACTA’s work “absolutely vital to raising awareness on an issue that still doesn’t get the attention it needs and deserves,” the video features a rich discussion between Tom McMillen and University System of Maryland

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Nevada Regents Ask ACTA's 10 Questions



President Marc Johnson of the University of Nevada-Reno responds to University of Nevada system regents, who ask ACTA's 10 questions to assess the health of the institution. (Photo: Tim Dunn/RGJ file)

ACTA's efforts to encourage accountability through trustee oversight were featured on the front page of the *Reno Gazette-Journal* this past March, after the regents of the University of Nevada system turned to ACTA's trustee

outlined by ACTA, which address pressing higher ed concerns ranging from rising tuition to student assessment.

Distributed to ACTA's network of trustees shortly after the publication of *Governance for a New Era*, the wallet card,

wallet card to help them assess the health of their institution. On March 6th, they asked University of Nevada-Reno president Marc Johnson to provide them with answers to each of the ten questions

Getting the Data: 10 Questions Trustees Should Ask, was produced with just this use in mind. ACTA's trustee outreach is helping to put the recommendations of the report's signatories into action at universities across the country, and we hope that trustees making headlines in Nevada will encourage other governing boards to insist on accountability from the schools they oversee.

The Nevada board has also asked each of the system's other seven presidents for in-depth data on key measures of university success, taking a major step toward increased transparency between administration and the governing board. The regents should be applauded for protecting students and taxpayers by asking tough questions to ensure educational quality and affordability. ●

Athletics and Academic Oversight, *continued from 2*

chancellor William "Brit" Kirwan. Chancellor Kirwan also serves as co-chair of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, whose purpose is to "ensure that intercollegiate athletics programs operate within the educational mission of their colleges and universities."

McMillen and Kirwan discuss the problems inherent in athletics oversight and how concerned boards can navigate these issues successfully, in order to guarantee that all students leave the institutions they serve with a quality education as well as the experience gained by participation in athletics. McMillen's personal experience, balancing academic excellence with athletic commitments, is testimony that college sports stars can also be outstanding students.

The administrators and professors behind the scandal at UNC Chapel Hill may have thought they were aiding the athletes for whose education they were responsible. Deborah Crowder, one of the key figures in the scandal, told investigators that she was trying to help students who were struggling to

maintain eligibility and scholarships, despite being unprepared for college-level work. But this is precisely the problem. The "paper classes" simply allowed UNC to pass these students through to the next stage of life as unprepared as they were when they arrived on campus. To really help these students, UNC, and higher ed generally, needs to stop looking at them as cash cows and start thinking of them as the students they are. ●

CONNECT.....

Are you a college or university trustee? Check out our new online resources—including podcasts and web videos—at **GoACTA.org**. Make sure to sign up for ACTA's e-mail updates to receive information about new resources and trustee events right in your inbox!

Effective TRUSTEESHIP



Penn State Trustee Exemplifies Effective Stewardship

In his work as a Penn State trustee, former business executive Bill Oldsey has become a symbol of engaged stewardship. Elected by fellow Penn State alumni shortly after the Jerry Sandusky scandal, Oldsey has made it his mission to help the school move past that dark period. The second in three generations of Penn State graduates (his father and two of his sons are also alumni), Oldsey's willingness to act is rooted in his deep connections to the school.

Along with fellow alumni-elected trustees, he convened a special meeting this past December in order to push for stronger board action against the NCAA sanctions levied on Penn State in the wake of the scandal. They made the case that continuing sanctions were holding Penn State back, and that agreements made between the school and the NCAA without board approval were wholly inappropriate. At the November 2014 board meeting, Oldsey quoted *Governance for a New Era* in calling on his fellow trustees to enable active, responsible trusteeship by maintaining an appropriate board size.

Penn State may have thought that it was doing the right

thing by bypassing the board with such serious matters at hand, but these are exactly the times when measured board oversight is most sorely needed. Oldsey sums up his approach in the position statement he presented to



Pennsylvania State University trustee Bill Oldsey.

Penn State alumni at the time of his election: "This is a pivotal period in Penn State's history. We will either be defined by a scandal not of our making or we can take bold initiatives to overhaul our governance structure and restore our rightful standing as a world class institution." ●

Lincoln Survey Exposes Historical Illiteracy



What do Americans know about the Civil War and President Abraham Lincoln? Precious little. On the 150th anniversary of his assassination, ACTA published the results of the Lincoln Awareness Survey. The dismal results showed that of surveyed college graduates, a third didn't know when the Civil War took place, and only 28% understood the effect of the Emancipation Proclamation.

ACTA's communications director, Daniel Burnett, wrote an op-ed for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on this important survey, illustrating just how forgetful America has become. A major contributing factor, as ACTA's What Will They Learn?™ survey demonstrates, is that foundational American government or history classes are required by less than one in five American colleges. Such weak requirements inevitably fail to impart knowledge critical for citizenship. Quoting Lincoln, Burnett implored us not only to "imagine better," but also "do better" in remembering our nation's history.

When classes about American history through baseball or the history of Rock and Roll can replace traditional classes in history, trustees need to step in to make sure our graduates are as literate in history as they are in technology. ●

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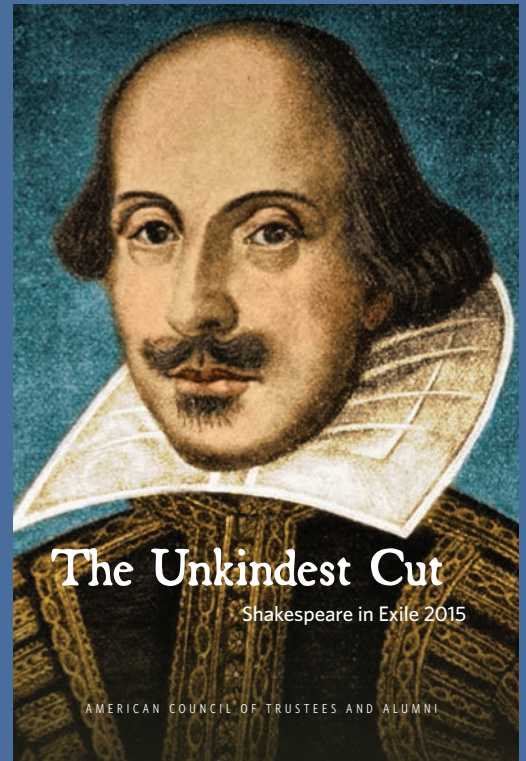
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The Unkindest Cut: Shakespeare in Exile 2015

On April 23rd, William Shakespeare's birthday, ACTA released a new report, examining what, if any, role Shakespeare had to play in today's college English programs. The results were astonishing. Researching English curricula at *U.S. News & World Report's* top 25 National Universities and top 25 Liberal Arts Colleges, ACTA found that only four of these highly-ranked schools required a dedicated Shakespeare course for the completion of an English degree.

Within hours, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Washington Post*, *Associated Press*, *USA Today*, and *San Francisco Chronicle* all reported on the story, sparking local and online debates about the value of Shakespeare. Across the pond, the *Telegraph* also lamented the state of America's English degrees. ACTA president Anne Neal was also interviewed on "Forum with Michael Krasny" on KQED—the NPR station for Northern California. A lively debate ensued between Neal and Roland Greene, the president of the Modern Language Association and comparative literature professor at Stanford. Callers and commenters shared their strong support for keeping Shakespeare in the literature curriculum.

Some schools insisted that "the Council doth protest too much," claiming there was no need for a designated Shakespeare requirement because other topics such as film, TV, and non-Western literature were equally important, and students often make the choice to study Shakespeare independently. ACTA contends that English departments should not leave the study of the most important writer of the English language to chance. Such loose standards mean that the English teachers of tomorrow might well go on to teach English never having studied Shakespeare, and our cultural legacy grows weaker. ●



ACCREDITATION UPDATE: Calls for Reform Gain Momentum in Washington

ACTA's campaign on accreditation reform continues to gain momentum. On the same day this past March, two separate federal committees—the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) and the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions—signalled their support for changes to the current system of higher education accreditation.

NACIQI held a conference call that day to discuss its most recent set of proposals, aimed at opening up the accreditation process to allow for greater innovation in the provision of higher education and at raising the standards to which schools are held. The committee voted to advance nine recommendations during

the meeting, including one that would "Provide greater flexibility for institutions to re-align themselves along sector, institution-type, or other appropriate lines. Allow for alternative accrediting organizations." The vote was a significant step towards ending the reign of the accreditation cartel.

A white paper published that same day by Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions chairman, Senator Lamar Alexander (TN), echoed this need for reform. The paper called on Congress to "redesign and reform accreditation to strengthen the quality of colleges and universities, promote competition and innovation in higher education, and provide accountability to government

stakeholders and taxpayers."

But the biggest news on the issue of accreditation is from the Supreme Court, which ruled the same month on *Department of Transportation v. Association of American Railroads*. The case considered the question of whether Amtrak should be considered a private or public institution. Recognizing the precedence that the ruling on Amtrak's status could set for similar rulings on accreditation agencies—which also blur the line between private entity and government agency—ACTA, along with several allies, submitted an amicus brief to the Court. Although the court ruled in favor of Amtrak, declaring it a governmental entity for the purposes of the original

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

Honors Ceremony at William & Mary

The Society for the College, at William & Mary, hosted its first ever College Honors Ceremony on April 9th. The Society for the College is William & Mary's independent voice for alumni, students, faculty, and friends of the college. It emphasizes academic excellence, good governance, and W&M's history and traditions.

Dr. William M. Kelso was presented with the Three Keys Award in honor of his contributions to historical and archeological scholarship—unearthing the original 1607 James Fort—and his work for Preservation Virginia's Historic Jamestowne.

Noah Lemos and George W. Grayson Jr. were both honored with the William Small Award for Faculty Excellence, which commemorates the contributions of 18th-century professor William Small. Small was a dedicated teacher and counted Thomas Jefferson among his pupils. Noah Lemos is a William & Mary professor and a noted authority on epistemology and ethics. The late George W. Grayson Jr. was a W&M professor for 44 years, served in the

Virginia House of Delegates, and was a staunch advocate for academic rigor.

Renewed Commitments to Free Speech

It is a basic principal that academic freedom and free speech are necessary to fulfill the role of higher education, but what those ideals mean when applied to an academic community merits frequent review. The University of Chicago and Princeton University recently revisited the issue and have each released new free speech statements. Johns Hopkins University assembled a task force dedicated to the issue, which is in the final stages of writing the University's first official statement on free speech.

In other campus First Amendment news, spurred by the efforts of ACTA friend and GMU professor Todd Zywicki, George Mason University has removed all of its speech codes, earning a green light rating from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. We hope other schools will follow their lead and pledge to uphold the First Amendment on campus. ●

Featured Donor: Hans Mark



The Honorable Dr. Hans Mark has been a friend of ACTA for over 15 years. A luminary in the field of engineering, aeronautics, and physics, Dr. Mark graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in physics in 1951 and earned his Ph.D. in physics from MIT.

Dr. Mark has served this country in multiple capacities. He became director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Ames Research Center in 1969 and was named Secretary of the Air Force in '79 by President Carter. He was appointed Deputy Administrator of NASA in 1981. He left NASA in '84 to become chancellor of the University of Texas System, also joining the UT faculty, teaching aerospace engineering. He was named the John J. McKetta Centennial Energy Chair in Engineering in 2001. He has received numerous honors including membership to the National Academy of Engineering, and the U.S. Navy's Distinguished Public Service Award, its highest civilian honor.

Throughout his busy career, Dr. Mark was actively involved with ACTA. He previously served on our National Council and currently sits on the selection committee for the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. ACTA is proud to count as a friend such a distinguished scientist, scholar, and public servant. ●

Accreditation Update, *continued from 5*

case and remanding it to a lower court, many of the accountability questions raised by ACTA and fellow amici were left open for consideration. In addition to raising these questions, the ruling confirms the spirit of ACTA's argument: bodies which straddle the line between public and private deserve great scrutiny and must be held accountable to Congress.

ACTA's president, Anne Neal, will bring this argument before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights during a hearing at the end of May. Reaffirming our stance that the accreditation system's gatekeeping role with regard to federal student aid has helped drive up the cost of college, Neal will propose that the failing system be replaced by one more accountable to Congress and to taxpayers and which reliably indicates the quality of the schools it reviews. Until this happens, institutions of higher education will continue to stagger under the weight of the outdated and overly burdensome accreditation process, and the public will not have the protection it deserves. ●

ACTA Turns 20

On March 17th, ACTA celebrated 20 years of success in advocating for higher education reform at F. Scott's in Washington, DC. Just steps from where ACTA was founded, the evening brought together a vibrant mix of ACTA's supporters and friends, from fellow reformers to like-minded college leaders. We were even visited by some of ACTA's favorite historical figures—George Washington and Queen Elizabeth the First!

After these special guests raised a toast to ACTA—and called for redoubling efforts to reform higher education—we celebrated how far we've come and thanked those gathered for the considerable support they have provided us over the years. ACTA's friends and allies have been integral to our

efforts in promoting academic excellence, academic freedom, and accountability. And the birthday events did not end there!



Former ACTA president Jerry Martin, Purdue University president and former governor of Indiana Mitch Daniels, and Anne Neal celebrate ACTA's 20th birthday Party.

Benno Schmidt—chairman of the City University of New York Board of Trustees, and ACTA's partner in facilitating the summit that produced the *Governance for a New Era* report—spoke before the Yale Club on the findings and recommendations in that report. Mr. Schmidt outlined his vision for university governance in the 21st century—a vision shared by ACTA—and answered questions about the report.

Governance for a New Era has made the case for reform in the strongest terms yet. It is fitting that this groundbreaking report has gained attention in ACTA's 20th anniversary year. ●

Hank Brown to Receive 2015 Merrill Award

As ACTA takes stock of two decades of hard-charging higher education reform, president Anne Neal and the Merrill search committee saw former U.S. Senator Hank Brown as a natural choice for the 2015 Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. Mr. Brown was a founding member of ACTA 20 years ago, and he identified issues that higher education still faces today. In 1995, Brown noted how the “PC War” was damaging colleges. He wanted to see “college campuses... be havens of intellectual thought, open debate and personal growth.”

From 1998-2002, Hank served as the 11th president of the University of Northern Colorado and from 2005-2008 as the 21st president of the University of Colorado. At both institutions he put his reform ideas into practice. At UNC, he cut 11 administrative positions, saving one million dollars. He reduced the college budget by 15%, and his reallocations meant that 54% of the University's budget went directly to instruction—the highest in the Colorado system. Brown raised standards for admission and created scholarships to draw more competitive students.

As president of CU, he quickly restored its morale and image, which had been damaged by previous financial, academic, and athletic scandals. During his tenure, he advanced intellectual diversity, took action against grade inflation, and gave the president's office a reputation for transparency, integrity, and accessibility. A small but revealing sign of the tenor of his administration came on his first day in office, when he relinquished the privilege of the president's parking spot.

Brown's fearless leadership set a nationwide example for how public institutions of higher education ought to run. ACTA is proud to have him, not only as this year's recipient of the Merrill award, but also as a great friend and ally in fighting for reform. ●





CELEBRATING **20** YEARS

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INSIDE ACADEME

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



We are pleased to announce that ACTA was awarded the **2015 Salvatori Prize for American Citizenship** from the Heritage Foundation! ACTA was selected in recognition of our promotion of civic empowerment, and President Anne Neal accepted the award on May 4th at the Heritage Foundation's annual Resource Bank Meeting in Seattle. In honoring ACTA, Heritage noted the important contributions our signature What Will They Learn?[™] project has made toward encouraging colleges and universities to require the study of American history and government.