

## Memo

### RE: ACTA Survey Findings

Key findings from the survey GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications conducted on behalf of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

### Method

Findings below are based on 1,005 interviews conducted by telephone, using random digit dial (RDD) sample, among a representative sample of Americans ages 18 and over in the continental United States. All interviews were conducted from August 5-7, 2011, and took, on average, 4 minutes to administer. Data were weighted to match national norms of age, sex, education, race, and geographic region.

The average margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3 percentage points at the 90% confidence level. Subsample margins of error are larger. A percentage with a letter after it indicates that the number in that column is significantly higher than the percentage in the column under the denoted letter.

**Most Americans agree colleges and universities should require classes in core subjects**

Seven in ten Americans (70%) agree colleges and universities should require that all students take basic classes in core subjects such as writing, math, science, economics, U.S. history, and foreign language.

Particularly likely to agree are 25-34 year-olds (80%) – those just out of college who may find learnings from such classes are helpful in the job market.

	Total (1,005)	Age				
		18-24 (31)	25-34 (95)	35-49 (169)	50-64 (358)	65+ (338)
Unweighted base		a	b	c	d	e
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, should require	70	69	80cd	66	64	73d
No, should not require	27	31b	14	34bc	33bc	19
Don't know	3	-	5	1	3	8acd
Refused	*	-	1	-	1	1

*In your view, should colleges and universities require all students to take basic classes in core subjects such as writing, math, science, economics, U.S. history, and foreign language, or not? (Q1)*

**Over half of Americans are surprised to learn that many higher education institutions do not require core classes**

Slightly over half (54%) of Americans are surprised to learn that some American colleges and universities, including some very prominent ones, do not require students to take any classes in basic economics, math, science, writing and U.S. history before they graduate. Most surprised are those of college age – ages 18 to 24.

	Total	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Unweighted base	(1,005)	(31)	(95)	(169)	(358)	(338)
		a	b	c	d	e
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Very/Somewhat Surprised</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>50</b>
Very surprised	23	10	28a	24	24	24a
Somewhat surprised	31	51b-e	27	31	28	27
<b>Not Very/At All Surprised</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>47</b>
Not very surprised	19	17	19	19	20	19
Not at all surprised	27	23	26	26	28	29
Don't know	*	-	-	-	*	2c-d
Refused	*	-	-	-	*	-

*Some American colleges and universities, including some very prominent ones, do not require students to take any classes in basic economics, math, science, writing and U.S. history before they graduate. No matter how you feel about this, would you say you are very surprised, somewhat surprised, not very surprised, or not surprised at all to learn this? (Q2)*

**Americans are divided as to whether students and parents choose a school based more on reputation or actual experience student will have**

Americans are roughly evenly split in believing that prospective college students and their parents choose a school based more on a) the school's reputation (42%) or b) the actual educational experience the student will have there (47%).

Those of college age (18-24 year olds) are most likely to say the choice is more based on the actual experience (55%). In contrast, those of or near their parents' age (35-49 year olds) are most likely to say the choice is due more to reputation (51%).

	Total	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Unweighted base	(1,005)	(31)	(95)	(169)	(358)	(338)
	%	a	b	c	d	e
More on educational experience	47	55	48	41	48	43
More on reputation	42	38	43	51de	41e	34
Not sure	11	4	10	7	10	22a-e
Refused	1	2	-	1	*	2

*Generally speaking, when selecting a school to attend, do you think students and their parents today place more emphasis on a college's or university's reputation or more emphasis on the actual educational experience the student will have at the school? (Q3)*

**Many Americans do not think students get their money’s worth from public universities and colleges**

Nearly half of Americans (46%) say today’s college students are “probably” or “definitely not” getting their money’s worth from public institutions of higher learning.

It is interesting to note that while most Americans of college age (70%) say they are getting or would get good value, that number drops to fewer than half among Americans of recent graduate age (46%), and the number does not rise among older Americans.

	Total	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Unweighted base	(1,005)	(31)	(95)	(169)	(358)	(338)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Definitely/Probably</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>70b-e</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>
Definitely	8	6	9	4	10	9
Probably	41	64b-e	37	43d	34	36
<b>Probably/Definitely Not</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>49a</b>	<b>50a</b>	<b>51a</b>	<b>44a</b>
Probably not	32	23	34	32	39e	27
Definitely not	14	3	15a	18a	12	17ad
Don't know	5	4	5	2	5	11b-d
Refused	1	-	-	1	1	*

*Do you think students today are definitely, probably, probably not, or definitely not getting their money’s worth from a college degree from most public colleges or universities? (Q4a)*

**Many Americans do not think students get their money’s worth from private universities and colleges**

As with public colleges and universities, nearly half of Americans (46%) say today’s college students are “probably” or “definitely not” getting their money’s worth from private institutions.

And, as with public colleges, while most Americans of college age (65%) say they are getting or would get good value from a private institution, while fewer than half of those of recent graduate age (44%) agree, and the number does not rise significantly among older Americans.

	Total	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Unweighted base	(1,005)	(31)	(95)	(169)	(358)	(338)
	%	a	b	c	d	e
<b>Definitely/Probably</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>65bde</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>43</b>
Definitely	13	26c-e	16d	10	9	11
Probably	35	39	27	39	38b	32
<b>Probably/Definitely Not</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>51a</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>46</b>
Probably not	31	23	32	32	30	34
Definitely not	15	8	19	16	15	13
Don't know	5	4	4	3	6	10bc
Refused	1	-	-	1	1	*

*Do you think students today are definitely, probably, probably not, or definitely not getting their money’s worth from a college degree from most private colleges or universities? (Q4a)*

**Over half of Americans say America’s institutions of higher learning are doing only a fair or poor job of preparing students for the job market**

Nearly six in ten Americans (57%) believe America’s colleges and universities are doing only a fair or poor job of preparing graduates for their future careers.

This is particularly true of Americans at the age in which many are building their careers – i.e., those 25-49 (66%).

	Total	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Unweighted base	(1,005)	(31)	(95)	(169)	(358)	(338)
	%	a	b	c	d	e
<b>Excellent/Good</b>	41	52b	33	37	46bce	37
Excellent	5	5	6	6	5	5
Good	35	47b	26	31	41bcd	31
<b>Only Fair/Poor</b>	57	48	66d	66d	51	57
Only fair	43	45	51de	47de	37	38
Poor	14	3	15a	15a	13	19ad
Don't know	2	-	1	1	2	6b-d
Refused	*	-	-	*	1	*

*Based on personal experience or anything you may have seen, heard, or read, would you say that, on average, American colleges and universities today are doing an excellent, good, only fair, or poor job in preparing their graduates for their future careers? (Q5)*