

## In This Issue...

- 2 In Box
- 3 New What Will They Learn?™ Sparks National Discussion on General Education  
Christopher Newport U. Receives Perfect ACTA "A"
- 4 Do You Know the Roosevelts?
- 5 Speaking Up: ACTA Calls for Accreditation Reform at Heritage Panel  
Neal Takes on Political Correctness in City Club Speech
- 6 2014 ATHENA Roundtable: Setting a Higher Bar for Higher Ed
- 8 Dr. Louis Mirrer Receives 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Merrill Award
- 9 Effective Trusteeship: Trustees Gather in Cambridge to Discuss Planning and Leadership  
Featured ACTA Donors: Leesa and Tim Donner
- 10 Heard on Campus: The Fight for Academic Freedom
- 11 ACTA Featured in New Higher Ed Documentary

## National Higher Ed Leaders Call for a New Era in University Governance



Tom McMillen, University of Maryland regent, John Engler, president of the Business Roundtable, Benno Schmidt, board chair of the City University of New York, and Richard DeMillo, Georgia Tech professor and director of the Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Universities, discuss *Governance for a New Era* at the National Press Club.

Led by **Benno C. Schmidt**, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York and past president of Yale University, a distinguished group of higher education leaders gathered in New York City to discuss the urgency of reforming higher education governance. The summit that took place in June culminated in a groundbreaking new report: *Governance for a New Era: A Blueprint for Higher Education Trustees*, which ACTA distributed in August to more than 16,000 trustees around the country.

Signed by 22 education and civic leaders, *Governance for a New Era*—also known as the Schmidt Report—demands that

trustees abandon the belief that trusteeship is merely a seat of honor and calls for active, informed engagement in all aspects of the college mission. In the report's introduction, Schmidt articulates the new approach: "Shared governance—which demands an inclusive decision-making process—cannot and must not be an excuse for board inaction ..."

The Schmidt Report argues that:

- Leadership of higher education is out of balance. Too many trustees have seen their role narrowly defined as boosters, cheerleaders, and donors.

(continued on 2)

## ACTA Celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2015

In the new year, ACTA will celebrate 20 years of fighting for academic freedom, excellence, and accountability. And we have big plans for our 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. We will hold several commemorative events throughout the year, launch a "Key Moments in ACTA History" series, and move to a brand new building! The celebration will culminate with a gala dinner at the National Geographic Society in Washington, DC on **October 16**. Mark your calendar today!

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

[info@goacta.org](mailto:info@goacta.org)

1-888-ALUMNI-8

**Dan Moulthrop, Chief Executive Officer  
The City Club of Cleveland**

“Thank you so much for bringing your thought-provoking vision to the City Club. We received great feedback from your presentation, and you inspired a fair bit of conversation among all our recent college grads on staff.”

*Editor’s Note: On October 3, ACTA president Anne Neal addressed the City Club of Cleveland on “Political Correctness and the Problems for Academic Freedom.”*

**Jonathan Rose, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of History  
Drew University, PA**

“I read about the ACTA report on the general neglect of history education among US colleges. I applaud your work! Or rather, I will applaud it, once I’ve pulled out of my depression. The real disgrace is that our universities congratulate themselves on offering ‘multicultural,’ ‘global’ education, and only 13% of them require a foreign language. Keep up the good fight!”

**Diane McCain, Director, External Relations  
State University System of Florida Board of Governors**

“We were honored to have you. ... Thank you again for helping to make our summit a success!”

*Editor’s Note: On November 5, ACTA president Anne Neal addressed the Florida Board of Governors Trustee Summit, “Charting the Path for the Future—Facing Challenges with Innovative Solutions.”*

**Dennis G. Stevens, Provost and Dean of the Faculty  
Hampden-Sydney College, VA**

“I am amazed but not surprised that SACS would work to ban you from the NACIQI meeting. Clearly, SACS has become an institution that loves to use its power, while not wanting to be held accountable for its own actions. I applaud your efforts and those of everyone at ACTA for your continued fight for quality education in the face of such obstacles.”

*Editor’s Note: Over the summer, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), which had been sharply criticized by ACTA, moved to have ACTA president Anne Neal recused from the June meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), on which she serves. Neal offered a scathing rebuke of SACS in a message delivered prior to the recusal. You can read excerpts of that address in the previous issue of Inside Academe on [GoACTA.org](http://GoACTA.org).*

**Nancy Booth  
Weems, VA**

“You might well be aware of this, but I was so pleasantly astonished. I just opened a fortune cookie and read it: ‘Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire. - W.B. Yeats. [www.whatwilltheylearn.com](http://www.whatwilltheylearn.com).’ What great advertising!”

*Editor’s Note: Yes, ACTA printed and distributed What Will They Learn?™ fortune cookies to draw attention to our online rating of core curricula at colleges and universities across the country. Keep your eye out for them!*

**Governance for a New Era, continued from 1**

- Trustees are fiduciaries for their institutions, but have a primary obligation to the taxpayers and students.
- While trustees and administrators have, for the most part, done a good job of protecting the academic freedom of faculty, they have often failed to guard the academic freedom of students.
- Trustees cannot and should not expect participants in the multibillion-dollar industry of intercollegiate athletics to ensure that academics remain a college’s primary mission.

After the report’s publication, ACTA brought key signatories together for a discussion at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. In addition to Benno Schmidt, we were joined by former governor of Michigan and president of the Business Roundtable, **John Engler**; Georgia Tech professor and director of the Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Universities, **Richard DeMillo**; and former U.S. Congressman and regent of the University of Maryland System, **Tom McMillen**. Benno Schmidt emphasized the urgency of the higher ed crisis by pointing out the lack of job skills and learning gains among graduates, as well as increasing tuition and poor cost control. Tom McMillen endorsed the report as a road map for leadership, noting the importance of transparency. Trustees

(continued on 4)

Download the  
**Governance for  
a New Era** report  
and action plan  
at [GoACTA.org/](http://GoACTA.org/)  
Publications.

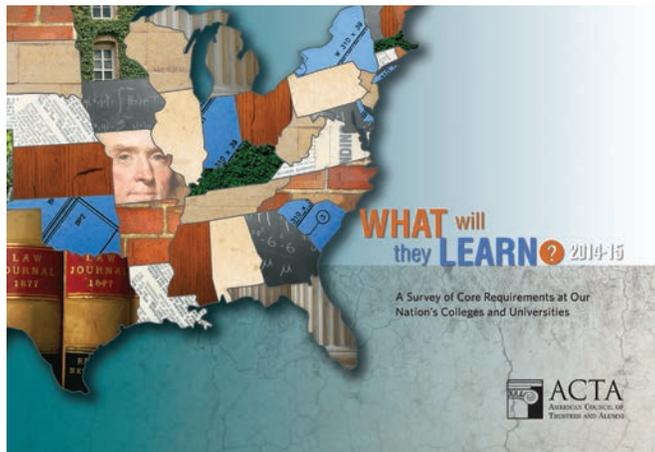
## New What Will They Learn?™ Sparks National Discussion on General Education

Just a few months ago, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa again rocked the world of higher education with the publication of *Aspiring Adults Adrift: Tentative Transitions of College Graduates*. This new study, which follows up on Arum and Roksa's earlier research into the limited learning that takes place on college campuses, paints a depressing picture for recent graduates. It seems that after four years and tens of thousands of dollars in tuition and fees, many graduates lack the tools to become productive employees and responsible citizens.

While this news may seem shocking on the surface, ACTA's latest edition of our annual What Will They Learn?™ survey of college core curricula shows

why is it hardly surprising.

What Will They Learn?™ 2014-15, released in October, surveys nearly 1,100 colleges and universities across the country and asks a simple question: what are students really studying during their time in college? Drawing on data from publicly-available course catalogues and graduation requirements, ACTA's guide evaluates how many of the following seven core subjects each school requires: Composition, Mathematics, Literature, Natural or Physical Science,



intermediate-level Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, and Economics.

What does What Will They Learn?™ reveal? In our modern, globalized world, only 13% of schools require the

(continued on 10)

## Christopher Newport U. Receives Perfect ACTA "A"

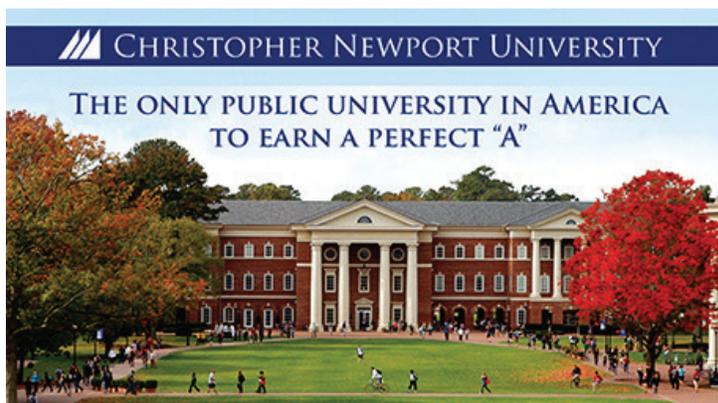
ACTA congratulates Virginia's Christopher Newport University (CNU) on becoming the nation's first public university to receive a perfect "A" in ACTA's What Will They Learn?™ survey of core curricula. Only 23 colleges and universities receive an "A" grade for requiring at least six out of the seven core subjects, and only four institutions earn a perfect "A" for requiring all seven.

Much effort went into this success. CNU has worked carefully for several years to enhance its general education program. CNU president Paul Tribble observed, "We want our students to lead lives of meaning, consequence, and purpose. ... That's why at CNU we study the liberal arts and sciences and emphasize leadership, and that's why we have a rigorous core curriculum." The Beazley Foundation, led by Judge Richard Bray, also played a crucial role in CNU's initiative, encouraging the university to add enough sections of economics to

require the course for all students. The Beazley Foundation's focus on strengthening college curricula throughout Virginia has been a major catalyst for the development of outstanding general education requirements in the state.

CNU now serves as an example to other state universities. As Michael Poliakoff, ACTA's vice president of policy and director of the What Will They Learn?™ project, noted, "[CNU] has set a new paradigm for public higher education, proving that an institution can strengthen its graduation rates and attract more applications while creating a thorough and rigorous education for all its students." Far from presenting universities with a choice between academic

excellence and institutional success, CNU shows that a strong general education positions a school for a very special and dynamic place in American higher education that properly gains widespread interest and support. ●



The original version of this ad appeared in the *Washington Post* on October 24, 2014.

## Do You Know the Roosevelts?



If you're a history enthusiast, you've no doubt heard of Ken Burns' critically acclaimed new documentary series, *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*. One of America's most storied political dynasties, the Roosevelts left their mark on the country and are an important touchstone in American history. Yet, few college graduates can tell Teddy from Franklin, and even fewer could tell you what either one did. Just as the new documentary aired in early September, ACTA got the results of a GfK Roper survey we commissioned on historical literacy. The latest in a series of surveys, this one's results were no better than before.

Not only did respondents do poorly on the survey overall, college education didn't make much of a difference. Of the college graduates

surveyed, almost half had no idea that Teddy Roosevelt played a role in the construction of the Panama Canal. A third couldn't identify FDR as the president who spearheaded the New Deal!

While this ignorance is deeply unsettling given the major political and social challenges the new generation of college graduates will have to navigate, it's not very surprising. After all, our 2014-15 What Will They Learn?™ study found that only 18% of colleges and universities require their students to study American history or government. With so few schools requiring students to ground themselves in the history of the nation in which they live, it's no shock that they lack the knowledge needed to be responsible, historically-literate citizens. ●

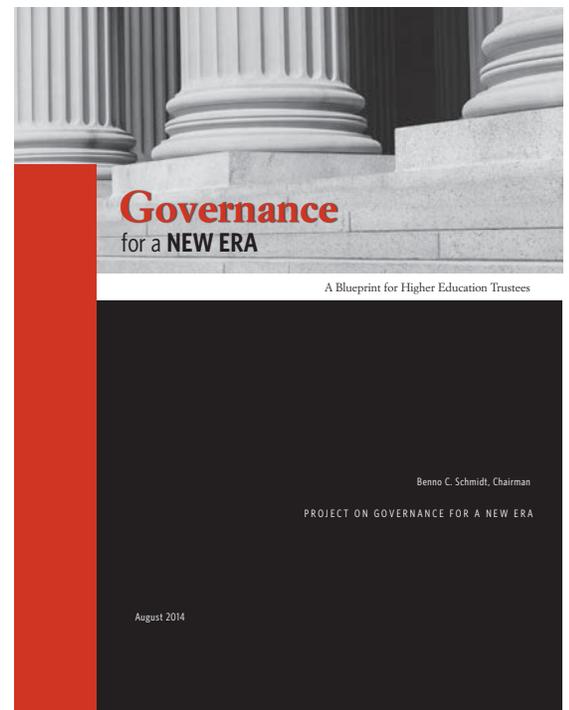
### Governance for a New Era, *continued from 2*

should be expected to know the facts about the state of their institution—warts and all, and for that they need metrics and data, including student input. John Engler emphasized accountability, pointing out the need to focus on outcomes like graduation rates rather than enrollment targets. And Richard DeMillo emphasized the importance of universities' social responsibility and America's long history of ensuring higher education serves public as well as private interests.

The press was quick to recognize the importance of this governance initiative. *Forbes* noted ACTA's "intrepid" approach to higher education and lauded the report's "muscular" view of active trusteeship, saying it "deserves a wide readership." And the *Oklahoman* praised the report's recommendations for their "common sense."

Though the report calls out instances of board failure to exercise fiduciary duties, it does much more than criticize. It gives those who feel their institutions are floundering the tools they need to help implement the broad policy recommendations. ACTA has now provided follow-up guidance to trustees in the form of an easy-to-navigate pamphlet and a wallet card. *Implementing Governance for a New Era: An Action Plan for Higher Education Trustees* distills the findings of the Schmidt report and shows university leaders how today's failures can be turned into tomorrow's flourishing institutions.

There is much work to be done to repair our colleges and universities, and it won't be easy. But ACTA is here to help. Download the full report and the action plan at [GoACTA.org/Publications](http://GoACTA.org/Publications). ●



## ACTA Calls for Accreditation Reform at Heritage Panel

ACTA's continuing fight to reform America's outdated system of college accreditation is picking up more steam than ever! On September 22, the Heritage Foundation hosted a panel entitled, "The Higher Education Act and Accreditation Reform: America's Higher Education is in Dire Need of Reform." And you can bet ACTA was well-represented. ACTA president Anne Neal and the head of ACTA's accreditation reform initiative, former Senator Hank Brown, joined the Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey and Heritage's Lindsey Burke for this wide-ranging discussion on how to fix what ails higher ed.

Senator Brown began the event by detailing the many ways in which the accreditation cartel prevents positive change at colleges and universities. From high costs to excessive concern with matters unrelated to educational quality, accrediting agencies are failing on all fronts. Brown took note of the bipartisan efforts to reform accreditation currently moving through Congress, and called for creating simpler, more focused systems of quality control that can serve as an alternative to the broken status quo.

Neal began her talk by noting that accreditation can be a good system if it is "voluntary peer review." But she went on to describe how empowering accreditors as gatekeepers of federal funds has led to all sorts of mischief. She described abuse after abuse perpetrated by accreditors

from Virginia to Ohio to Hawaii. Rather than focusing on quality control, Neal said, accrediting agencies often meddle in internal matters of university governance and use their gatekeeping powers to bully schools. The solution is one ACTA has been advocating for over a decade: delinking federal higher education funding from accreditation. By returning accreditors to their intended role as voluntary peer reviewers, Neal argued, we can restore "the transparency and choice we need" to American higher education.

After McCluskey warned about the perils of the federal student aid program, Heritage opened the floor for questions. The audience's interest in the issue was palpable, and the Q&A went on for nearly half an hour!

Accreditation, once a fringe topic rarely discussed outside a small circle of experts, is quickly becoming a top-tier issue for an increasing number of policymakers. From think tanks like Heritage, AEI, and the New America Foundation to the halls of Congress and the White House, accreditation reform is now an indispensable centerpiece of efforts to improve higher education. For years, ACTA was a lone voice in the wilderness on the issue of accreditation. Today, we are joined by a chorus of reform-minded voices, signaling change is on the way.

View the full video of the discussion at [www.heritage.org/events](http://www.heritage.org/events). ●

## Neal Takes on Political Correctness in City Club Speech

This October, the City Club of Cleveland invited ACTA president Anne Neal to speak on the threat political correctness and campus orthodoxies pose to academic freedom. Neal commended the City Club for being a gathering place for the free exchange of ideas, but noted that much of higher education is now hostile to that free exchange, as her speech soon made clear.

She first discussed the scourge of campus disinventions, an all-too-common method of silencing controversial speakers. But the heckler's veto is not the only mischief in the silencer's toolbox. She went on to discuss "trigger warnings" that shield students from challenging subject matter, as well as the veritable disappearance of key academic disciplines like military history. At the politically correct university, President Neal said, "there is no need to search for truth, because the institution has already determined what the truth is."

As a consequence, the academy is abandoning its heritage and birthright of bold inquiry and thought, betraying the trust of those who support it. In repressing the free exchange of ideas, colleges doom students to a narrow world view and a limited ability to reason and investigate. ACTA fights this trend, reminding colleges and trustees of their duty to develop strong policies to protect academic freedom and intellectual diversity on campus. ●

**INSIDE ACADEME** published by ACTA, Washington, DC

Publisher: Anne D. Neal • Editor: Avi Snyder • Production & Design: Lauri Kempson

Telephone: 1-888-ALUMNI-8 • Email: [info@goacta.org](mailto:info@goacta.org) • Website: [www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org) • Blog: [www.goactablog/the\\_forum](http://www.goactablog/the_forum)

## 2014 ATHENA Roundtable Setting a Higher Bar for Higher Ed

On the morning of November 7, Columbia University's beautiful Italian Academy was abuzz with talk of higher education as ACTA's 2014 ATHENA Roundtable got underway. ACTA's board chairman, **Robert Lewit**, set the tone, asking if schools were preparing students for the "responsibilities of citizenship." ACTA president **Anne Neal** then welcomed the participants, noting what an exciting time it was for higher education, with many challenges to overcome but many opportunities to do so.

The day's first panel focused on restoring academic excellence at America's colleges and universities. **Paul Tribble**, president of Virginia's Christopher Newport University, noted that "rigorous core curriculum is not only right, but also can and will be rewarded." CNU is a new What Will They Learn™ "A" school this year and the only public university to earn a perfect "A." President Tribble encouraged other schools to follow in CNU's footsteps for their own good as well as that of their students. **Peter Alcock**, a Pine Manor College trustee, detailed his efforts to improve academic quality at his institution. And the **Honorable Richard Bray**, president of the Beazley Foundation, spoke on how informed philanthropy can be used to focus schools on their academic outcomes and put education back in its rightful place as the most important mission of a college or university.

Next was a discussion on university governance and the need for trustees to engage in the life of their institutions. Anne Neal started with the insistence that: "Shared governance must not be an excuse for board inaction." Trustees—with a unique perspective that helps balance the interests of administrators, faculty, students, and the wider community—should be actively engaged in the life of their institutions. This perspective, Brooklyn College history professor and panelist **KC Johnson** explained, can help break through "an environment of academic groupthink among the faculty." **Richard DeMillo**, director of Georgia Tech's Center for

21<sup>st</sup> Century Universities, expanded on the theme, describing how trustees can also encourage their institutions to break through another kind of groupthink by trying new educational models. **Benno Schmidt**, chairman of the City University



Peter Alcock



Richard DeMillo, KC Johnson, and Benno Schmidt



Paul Tribble and Richard Bray



Robert Caro



Goldie Blumenstyk



Frank Brogan



Rick

of New York Board of Trustees, brought the discussion full circle to the recommendations of *Governance for a New Era*, a groundbreaking report published this past August, which urges trustees to take responsibility for the institutions they serve. He

detailed three areas where improvement is needed: academic freedom, disciplinary diversity, and accountability.

After lunch, accreditation reform was the focus, and participants heard from ACTA's scholar-in-residence **Clara**



Roger Hertog



Betty Capaldi Phillips



O'Donnell, Paul Gaston, Clara Lovett, and Hank Brown

**Lovett; Paul Gaston**, Trustees Professor at Kent State; and former U.S. Senator and University of Colorado president **Hank Brown**, head of ACTA's accreditation reform initiative. **Rick O'Donnell**, chief revenue officer for the Fullbridge

Program, moderated. We learned that the accreditation system has changed quite a bit from its original form. The early system, Lovett explained, was designed with a clear purpose to hold institutions accountable for their promises to students and

society. Today, however, accreditors pursue what Paul Gaston called "many missions," which has led to much confusion. Hank Brown noted that this confusion is endemic in a system that plays a gatekeeping role for federal funding. Accreditation is often used to push political initiatives forward at the expense of simply reviewing institutional quality. Brown suggested that eliminating this role would allow accreditors to re-focus on the original mission of peer review.

The final panel focused on the central issue of ensuring students receive the best "bang for their buck." *Chronicle of Higher Education's* **Goldie Blumenstyk**, former Arizona State University provost **Betty Capaldi Phillips**, and Penn State System chancellor **Frank Brogan** offered a number of practical solutions, including a call for a more coherent system of general education as well as a more agile and innovative academic structure. These steps would not only help students, but would save the institution money as well. Spending on athletics, whose growth now outpaces that of academic spending, should be scaled back. And institutions could end what Capaldi Phillips called "the proliferation of dean-lets," otherwise known as administrative bloat. Blumenstyk noted that the *Chronicle* often hears from administrators, but rarely from trustees. She encouraged trustees to reach out to the media and give a fuller picture of what's happening in higher ed.

Every panel was followed by a lively question and answer session, and Neal closed the conference with the hope that the Roundtable had left attendees

empowered to act. She reiterated the need for a strong foundation in the classical liberal arts, saying that: "Critical thinking is key, but you can't think critically if there's no content to think about." Indeed. ●

## Dr. Louise Mirrer Receives 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Merrill Award



Louise Mirrer with Anne Neal

Where American history has become a discipline and a course in which individual histories are all placed together on an equal footing, our exhibitions make it clear that it is only because of the ideas on which our nation was founded ... that today these individual histories can flower and be told. ... Our objective, simply put, has been to show that the totality of the American experience is built on an American foundation.” So **Dr. Louise Mirrer**, winner of ACTA’s 10<sup>th</sup> Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education, proclaimed in her acceptance speech at Manhattan’s beautiful Colony Club. As president and CEO of the New-York Historical Society, Mirrer has dedicated her life to teaching Americans about our exceptional history, and ACTA’s 10<sup>th</sup> annual Merrill Award was a fitting tribute to her life’s work.

We kicked off the evening with a screening of *Celebrating the Liberal Arts: The Merrill Award at 10*, a short film featuring previous Merrill Award winners Thomas Rollins, Robert George, and Donald Kagan. The film tells the story of Phillip Merrill’s insistence on the importance of the liberal arts and ACTA’s commitment to carrying on his legacy.

We then heard from three tribute givers on the importance of Mirrer’s work and accomplishments. **Roger Hertog**, chairman of the New-York Historical Society Executive Committee, chronicled Mirrer’s incredible success in reinvigorating the Society. **Robert Caro**, one of America’s most celebrated historians, discussed his childhood love of the New-York Historical Society and the way in which Mirrer had restored it to the landmark of his youth. Finally, **Benno Schmidt**, chairman of the City University of New York Board of Trustees, spoke of Mirrer’s time at CUNY as Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and how her dedication improved the teaching of history.

Mirrer shared many stories during her speech, but one of the most powerful concerned the role our nation’s founding principles played in advancing justice and freedom. Mirrer quoted Frederick Douglass when he declared, “All I ask of the American people is that they live up to the Constitution, adopt its principles, imbibe its spirit, and enforce its provisions.” As Mirrer put it, “One could say that George Washington, metaphorically, at least, meant everything in the world to Frederick Douglass. How is it possible for this not to be true for our newest Americans today?”

If scholars continue to forget the uniqueness of the great American experiment in self-government, our commitment to the values of democracy and a free society will wither and disappear. Thankfully, women like Louise Mirrer are working tirelessly to preserve that legacy, and ACTA was proud to honor her for her work in doing so. ●



ACTA supporters gathered in upper Manhattan for a special tour of Alexander Hamilton’s home “The Grange” led by historian Myron Magnet. Mr. Magnet gave an incredible inside look at the Founding Father’s life from his boyhood in the Caribbean, to his days serving under Washington, to his infamous death by duel. The Grange has had quite the life of its own, including a restoration project that involved lifting it 35 feet off the ground and moving it to where it sits now in St. Nicholas Park. Beautifully restored, the Alexander Hamilton National Memorial was surely a treat for ACTA and its guests.

# Effective TRUSTEESHIP



## Trustees Gather in Cambridge to Discuss Planning and Leadership

How can governing boards and presidents work together to build a better future for their institutions? That's the question trustees and policy experts at the Harvard Faculty Club tackled in October at ACTA's most recent trustee seminar. Held in conjunction with the Aspen Institute, ACTA's trustee seminars bring together college and university trustees from a wide variety of institutions to discuss classic and contemporary texts on higher education and learn about how to serve as educated and engaged fiduciaries.

The trustees who gathered in Cambridge hailed from schools near and far, including Penn State, University of Toledo, Mt. Ida College, Pine Manor College, and the University of Nebraska. Also in attendance were representatives from the Maine Policy Center, a think tank with which ACTA has worked to improve higher education in the Pine Tree State.

ACTA's Michael Poliakoff and



Hal Daub, University of Nebraska trustee; Hank Brown, former U.S. Senator and past president of University of Colorado; Harry Lewis, former dean of Harvard College, and Barbara Doran, Penn State trustee.

Armand Alacbay were joined by former U.S. Senator and past University of Colorado president **Hank Brown** in leading the discussion. Participants examined a set of texts that ranged from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' dissent in *Abrams v. United States* to the observations that activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali had planned to share at Brandeis University before her disinvitation. A highlight of the day was

Hank Brown's keynote, which included a detailed focus on proven ways to rein in spending and redirect funding to instructional priorities. Former dean of Harvard College **Harry Lewis** also contributed important observations on the board's role in academic matters.

To learn more about ACTA's trustee seminars, visit [www.GoACTA.org](http://www.GoACTA.org) or contact us at (202) 467-6787. ●

## FEATURED ACTA DONORS: Leesa and Tim Donner



Leesa and Tim Donner are leading advocates for a renewed focus on America's founding principles, noted philanthropists, and public servants—as well as long-time supporters of ACTA!

Both of the Donners have had distinguished careers in broadcast journalism. Mr. Donner founded Horizons Television, a media production company, before running for the U.S. Senate from Virginia. He also founded One Generation Away, a leading organization that applies America's founding principles to the public policy debates of today. One Generation Away offers a Liberty Speaker Series, which will include ACTA president Anne Neal next spring! And for many years, Mr. Donner was an award-winning broadcaster and host of the popular "Talkin' Baseball" radio talk show. Mrs. Donner is creative director of Horizons Television

and executive vice president at One Generation Away. Earlier in her career, she was a reporter and news anchor, as well as producer of the nation's leading local prime time newscast, "The 10 O'Clock News," at Fox Television's Washington, DC affiliate. Mrs. Donner is also a published author. Her book *Free at Last: A Life Changing Journey Through the Gospel of Luke* was released in 2013.

We thank the Donners for their ardent efforts to reinvigorate the nation's engagement with its founding principles and for their unflagging support of ACTA! ●



## The Fight For Academic Freedom

### A Tale of Two Presidents

Yale president Peter Salovey surprised many this fall by welcoming the class of 2018 with a speech about the importance of free expression on campus.

Quoting extensively from the C. Vann Woodward Report, a definitive document on free expression penned as a response to the civil unrest that shook Yale in the 1970s, Salovey declared that “We need to be able to discuss intelligently anything and everything in order to engage each other in the best education possible[.]” And ACTA couldn’t have agreed more with the sentiment Salovey expressed when he quoted the report’s definition of the university as a place characterized by the ability to “think the unthinkable, discuss the unmentionable, and challenge the unchallengeable.” Indeed, this is the very principle ACTA outlines in its popular guidebook on academic freedom, *Free to Teach, Free to Learn*.

President Salovey got the chance to prove his commitment to free speech when students and faculty attempted to pressure the university into disinviting

activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali from an event planned by Yale’s William F. Buckley Jr. Program. Thankfully, the speech went forward as planned, and featured vibrant and informative exchanges rather than disruption and protest.

ACTA commended Yale and President Salovey for this commitment to free speech on our blog, *The Forum*, and we contrasted his approach with that of UC-Berkeley’s chancellor, Nicholas Dirks, who had a different message for this year’s incoming freshman class.

Chancellor Dirks sent an e-mail to the UC-Berkeley community in early September, urging that free speech take a backseat to the value of “civility” on campus. The e-mail received a great deal of criticism, especially for positioning “political advocacy” as somehow outside the realm of free speech. The cherry on top of this self-censorship sundae was the context of the e-mail—this fall marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UC-Berkeley’s legendary Free Speech Movement. It seems Chancellor Dirks has made it very clear that free expression is not welcome at Berkeley any more.

### A Tale of Two Colleges

Sadly, the disinvitation push against Hirsi Ali wasn’t the only one this fall. Political analyst George Will was the target of efforts at both Scripps College and Miami University as he made his way around the country on a speaking tour. ACTA criticized Scripps College’s leadership for giving in to student pressure and rescinding Will’s invitation, and reminded students across the nation that disinviting controversial speakers undermines the status of the university as a place of free expression and the exploration of new and challenging ideas.

ACTA praised Miami, who—in contrast to Scripps—hosted Will for a lecture. Miami’s president, David Hodge, appropriately took pride in a campus where a controversial speaker was permitted to speak and an orderly and peaceful protest was allowed to take place. This is what academic freedom looks like.

As we head into December graduations, we hope students and faculty will take this message to heart. And if they don’t, ACTA will be standing by to defend free speech and open debate. ●

### What Will They Learn, *continued from 3*

equivalent of three semesters of foreign language study. Though many colleges are hotbeds of social activism, less than 20% of them require a foundational course in U.S. history or government, and just over 3% require even a single course in basic economics. Despite all the national buzz about our need for more STEM education, less than two-thirds of schools require college-level math. In total, a mere 23 schools require even six of these seven basic subjects. So what *are* students learning? At Harvard, they can fulfill their literature requirement with “American Dreams from Scarface to Easy Rider.” At the University of Colorado-Boulder, students can take “Horror Films and American Culture” or “America Through Baseball” in lieu of an American history course. And these are but a few examples.

This year, ACTA released What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> grades for individual schools at [www.whatwilltheylearn.com](http://www.whatwilltheylearn.com) in real time as reviews were completed and launched the comprehensive guide in October, igniting a major national discussion about the state of education on campus. The *Wall Street Journal* wrote that the report “comes amid growing unease about the value of a university degree ... and employer complaints that graduates are entering the workforce without basic skills.” *Bloomberg Businessweek* also weighed in, highlighting the tendentious and silly courses that today often pass for college-level study. Even *U.S. News & World Report*, of college ranking fame, covered our findings!

Despite the report’s alarming discoveries, American higher ed is far from hopeless. What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> shows that any type of school—from a large public institution like the University of Georgia to a small liberal arts school like Colorado

*(continued on 11)*

## ACTA Featured in New Higher Ed Documentary



ACTA's leaders are rapidly becoming the “go-to” experts when it comes to explaining the crises plaguing American higher education. Just recently, ACTA president Anne Neal and vice president of policy Michael Poliakoff were interviewed for a new documentary, *The Costs of College*, which explores the causes and effects of ever-rising college costs.

Produced by filmmaking duo James and Mary Mackenzie, the film humanizes debates over higher education by telling the stories of young people saddled with student debt. The viewer is introduced to a struggling drama major, a graduate with six-figure liabilities, and an

aspiring writer who serves food in a trailer park to pay off her loans. Each of these college graduates wonders why college has gotten so expensive that he or she had to take on massive debt to pay the way.

Neal and Poliakoff provide the answers. ACTA's experts explain how the college accreditation cartel drives up costs while doing little to protect academic quality; how administrative bloat and executive compensation have skyrocketed in recent years; and how the rush for extravagant campus amenities ends up passing along significant costs to students. “The bottom line,” Neal says in the film, “is when schools have to spend money, students are going to end up footing the bill.”

If there are still those who doubt that the higher ed bubble is a threat to the future of the country, this film will quickly shake them out of their stupor. To see aspiring writers, scientists, and actors start their lives under the crushing weight of student debt is truly heartbreaking. “It’s time to stop the swagger,” Poliakoff declares near the end of the film, “The burden really is on colleges and universities to provide value for that money.”

Yes, it is. And when higher education starts bearing that burden, perhaps the burden of debt on the shoulders of college graduates will get a bit lighter. ●



©2014 Rob Rogers/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Reprinted with permission.

### What Will They Learn, *continued from 10*

Christian—can adopt a rigorous core curriculum. If engaged trustees and intelligent donors make academic excellence a priority, then change happens.

With 87% of employers saying that colleges must raise the quality of students' education and four out of five Americans supporting stronger general education requirements, ACTA's message of curricular excellence is timelier than ever.

If you want to see how *your* alma mater fares, look it up on [www.whatwilltheylearn.com](http://www.whatwilltheylearn.com) or order a print copy of the guide at [GoACTA.org](http://GoACTA.org). ●



**INSIDE ACADEME**  
1726 M Street, NW, Suite 802  
Washington, DC 20036

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



*Hearty Thanks and Best Wishes*  
*from the*  
*American Council of Trustees and Alumni*

*Aure Michael Sai*  
*Daniel Luca Axel*  
*Colleen*  
*Jacque Ari Victoria*  
*Alex Jordan EVAN*