



USA Today - May 29, 1996

Group to Distribute Alumni Donations

By Mike Madden
USA TODAY

The National Alumni Forum (ACTA), a group trying to involve college graduates in campus academic affairs, recently launched a program to target donations to specifically approved programs.

Conservative Republican Lynne Cheney, who chairs the Washington, D.C.-based group, says some alumni refuse to support their schools because "they are concerned that the money goes for things that are harmful to higher education." These potential donors worry that their gifts will pay for what they see as politically correct -- and academically weak -- studies.

Cheney says her group seeks to encourage these alumni to funnel donations through its Fund for Academic Renewal, which will finance only programs that meet ACTA criteria of academic excellence. She says they will free donors from investigating that colleges use the money for its intended purpose.

But some higher education officials do not welcome the groups efforts. Jon Heintelman, assistant vice president for development at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., says third-party fund-raisers like the fund can interfere with the relationship between universities and their donors. He also worries that the ACTA may have more than simple charity at stake. "With groups like that it's almost impossible for them not to have some kind of agenda," he says.