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**ACTA CALLS ON NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY  
TO PROVE ITS COMMITMENT TO FREE SPEECH**

**WASHINGTON, DC (April 26, 2006)** — In the wake of a major scandal, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni has called on the Northern Kentucky University Board of Regents to ensure that the First Amendment rights of NKU students and faculty are fully protected.

In a letter addressed to NKU's Board of Regents, ACTA urged the university's top officials to take decisive action to guarantee the robust exchange of ideas on campus.

“If NKU wants to prove its commitment to free expression, it should repeal its speech code, and take steps to ensure that all faculty, students, administrators, and staff understand their rights and responsibilities. As a public institution, NKU has a legal obligation to uphold the First Amendment,” said ACTA president Anne Neal. “It cannot do so if it enforces unconstitutional restrictions on speech.”

ACTA’s letter comes in the wake of national news stories reporting that NKU English professor Sally Jacobsen invited a group of graduate students to “express their freedom-of-speech rights to destroy” an anti-abortion display of crosses on a campus lawn. Jacobsen, whose participation in the destruction of the display was captured on camera, revealed a shocking disregard for both the First Amendment rights of the student group that erected the display as well as for the rights of her own students not to be pressed into political action by a professor.

President James Votruba has repudiated Jacobsen's actions and declared his willingness to cooperate with the police in pursuing charges. He has also removed Jacobsen from the classroom and placed her on leave for the rest of the term.

But existing university policies still inhibit the free exchange of ideas on campus. NKU's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities currently prohibits “harassing, annoying, or alarming another person” and “making an offensive coarse utterance, gesture or display, addressing abusive language to any person” as “misconduct” that is “subject to disciplinary action.”

Such a policy, said ACTA, encourages the sort of behavior Jacobsen and her students displayed. “It not only sends the message that NKU students and faculty have a right not to be offended, but also raises the erroneous expectation that offensive expression should be punished and removed,” ACTA said.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is a national nonprofit dedicated to academic freedom, intellectual diversity, and accountability in higher education. It works with hundreds of college and university trustees and alumni across the country. In December 2005, ACTA issued a guidebook for trustees, *Intellectual Diversity: Time for Action*, which outlined steps boards can take to ensure the robust exchange of ideas on campus—including the elimination of speech codes.

For more information, contact Anne Neal at 202-467-6786 or go to [www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org).

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