

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Anne D. Neal, 202-467-6787; c: 920-251-9308

**HIGHER EDUCATION IS THREATENED BY DECLINING ACADEMIC QUALITY
STUDENTS GRADUATE WITHOUT MATH, SCIENCE, OTHER FUNDAMENTALS**

**Indiana University Part of the Problem
ACTA Calls for Active Stewardship and Curricular Reforms**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (April 7, 2006)—American Council of Trustees and Alumni president Anne Neal today called on the academic community to reform the general education curriculum, end grade inflation and welcome more active and informed trusteeship in testimony before the Commission on the Future of Higher Education.

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings launched the Commission late last year to “ensure that America’s system of higher education remains the finest in the world.” Commission Chairman Charles Miller invited Neal to address accountability at a field hearing held in Indianapolis on April 6 and 7. The Commission, which is composed of 19 representatives from both the public and private sectors, is expected to issue a report by August 1.

“Students today, in too many cases, receive an education in name only,” Neal told the Commission. “They are graduating without the fundamentals they need to be informed citizens, effective workers, and life-long learners.”

“Alumni and trustees know and understand that, to remain competitive, our institutions of higher learning must remain focused on academic excellence and transparency,” Neal told the Commission. “And they are alarmed by what they see. They are troubled by rising costs, a diffuse and ‘dumbed down’ curriculum, and lack of accountability. ... It is imperative that our colleges and universities refocus their efforts on academic quality and accountability if they are to remain the finest in the world.”

Neal zeroed in on the troubling decline in a rigorous general education, rampant grade inflation, and a broad lack of institutional accountability.

She quoted from an ACTA report, *The Hollow Core*, in which Indiana University received a grade of D since its students can graduate without taking broad core classes in college-level math, science, literature, economics, American history or government. In the same study, Purdue received a B since students there must take courses in composition, foreign languages, mathematics, and science before they graduate.

Neal urged the following:

1. Review and reform of the general education curriculum.
2. An end to grade inflation.
3. Development of institutional expectations and assessments for student learning.
4. An end to mandatory federal accreditation.
5. Gubernatorial focus on informed college and university trustees.
6. Trustee training.
7. The hiring of presidents who will be agents of change.
8. Board transparency.

ACTA's statement for the record is available at www.goacta.org.

ACTA is a nonprofit educational organization of trustees and alumni around the country dedicated to academic freedom and excellence. For further information, call 202-467-6787.

###