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ACTA PRAISES SMITH COLLEGE FOR CURRICULAR REFORM

Alumnae Promote Academic Quality

WASHINGTON, DC (June 15, 2006)—Responding to plans by Smith College to introduce a mathematics-based requirement for all graduates, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni praised the liberal arts college for listening to alumnae input on curricular reform.

“Alumni and trustees know and understand that if our institutions of higher learning wish to remain competitive, they must give students the broad-based knowledge and skills necessary in our global marketplace,” ACTA president Anne D. Neal noted. “Smith deserves praise for taking the lead in reviewing and improving its general education curriculum.”

Carol T. Christ, president of Smith, told reporters that she had received many e-mails and letters from alumnae about what the college could do better, particularly in regards to understanding and applying numerical information. Various alumnae, in fields ranging from government operations to journalism to non-profit leadership, had reported they had little knowledge in statistics, logic and reasoning. “There are no careers where you don’t need to use quantitative reasoning anymore,” Christ told the media in discussing Smith’s planned curricular change.

In a study entitled *The Hollow Core: The Failure of the General Education Curriculum*, ACTA surveyed the Big 10, Big 12, Ivy League, Seven Sisters (including Smith), and several other major institutions and found that students could graduate without taking core subjects such as math, science, composition, literature, economics, American history or government. The schools were graded on the basis of their course requirements; Smith received an “F” since students currently can graduate without taking mathematics, literature, language, American government or history, economics, or science. For example, only 38 percent of the institutions surveyed required students to take a mathematics course, and not one required a course in economics.

“Too many colleges have abdicated their responsibility to direct their students—especially freshmen and sophomores—to the most important subjects,” said Neal. “Smith deserves praise for beginning to address the problem.”

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is a national nonprofit dedicated to academic freedom, academic standards and accountability in higher education. ACTA works with college and university alumni across the country as well as hundreds of trustees representing more than a million students.