

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Contact: Anne D. Neal, 202-467-6787

**REPORT OFFERS NEW HISTORY OF COLUMBIA CORE CURRICULUM**

**Famed Scholar Jacques Barzun Outlines Importance of Core for College Graduates**

**WASHINGTON, DC (June 30, 2006)**—As more and more boards of trustees examine their general education curricula, famed historian and former Columbia University Provost Jacques Barzun is weighing in. In a special essay, entitled "The Columbia Core: A Look Back," Barzun offers an informative historical account of the creation of the Columbia Core Curriculum in response "to academics (and even more alumni) [who] have become alarmed by the narrow and politically tendentious courses that make up the whole offering at many colleges, including some of the reputed best."

The essay is being released this month by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni and the Institute for Effective Governance.

Barzun, author of *Dawn to Decadence*, was one of the prime architects of the Columbia core curriculum where he was student, professor and the inaugural Dean of Faculties and Provost. In response to a request from an old friend, he set down what he describes as "the beginnings and workings of the now famous but scarcely known Columbia 'core' of eighty years ago." "At the conclusion of the First World War a few of the faculty members who had been abroad with the troops came back resolved to teach the new generations the ideals and history of Western Civilization," Barzun writes, "in hopes that when they were leaders of opinion and makers of policy they might avoid the ghastly mistakes that had brought the Continent to self-destruction in total war."

The Columbia core curriculum is also featured in *Becoming an Educated Person: Toward a Core Curriculum for College Students*, a report issued by ACTA and IEG in 2003 for trustees, alumni, parents, students, and policymakers who wished to learn about core curricula and how institutions can construct and implement them.

"Colleges and universities owe it to their graduates to give them a coherent curriculum that prepares them to be informed citizens, effective workers and life-long learners," said ACTA president Anne D. Neal. "Fortunately, there are still institutions like Columbia that have maintained a strong core curriculum and can serve as a model for others who want to ensure a better education for our young people."

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is a national organization of alumni and trustees dedicated to academic freedom, academic excellence and accountability in higher education. ACTA is also author of the report, *The Hollow Core: Failure of the General Education Curriculum*, which surveys 50 colleges and universities, including all of the Big Eight and Big Ten universities, the Ivy League, the Seven Sisters colleges, and an additional grouping of 13 colleges and finds that many colleges have abandoned core requirements in favor of a loose set of "distribution" requirements. For more information or to order these publications, contact ACTA at [info@goacta.org](mailto:info@goacta.org), or 1-888-ALUMNI-8.

###