



MOMENTUM

Restoring the Promise of Higher Education

2017 Annual Report





Promoting **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**, **ACADEMIC FREEDOM**, and **ACCOUNTABILITY** at America's colleges and universities.

The **American Council of Trustees and Alumni** is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to academic excellence, academic freedom, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Founded in 1995, ACTA is the only national organization dedicated to working with alumni, donors, trustees, and education leaders across the United States to support liberal arts education, uphold high academic standards, safeguard the free exchange of ideas on campus, and ensure that the next generation receives an intellectually rich, high-quality education at an affordable price. Our network consists of alumni and trustees from nearly 1,300 colleges and universities, including over 23,000 current board members. Our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, reaches over 13,000 readers.

from the President

The Roman statesman Cicero said, “Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.” At ACTA, my colleagues and I are ever mindful of our gratitude to you, our supporters, to ACTA’s founders and leaders, to the teachers and thinkers, and to the thought leaders and scholars, all of whom have inspired us.

ACTA has gone from strength to strength in advancing our mission to ensure that American higher education is the finest in the world. I can report, proudly, on how well we have led schools, coast to coast, to strengthen cost-control and accountability, nurture academic excellence, and enhance academic freedom. We have indeed achieved impressive momentum in strengthening schools around our three “A’s” of accountability, academic excellence, and academic freedom.

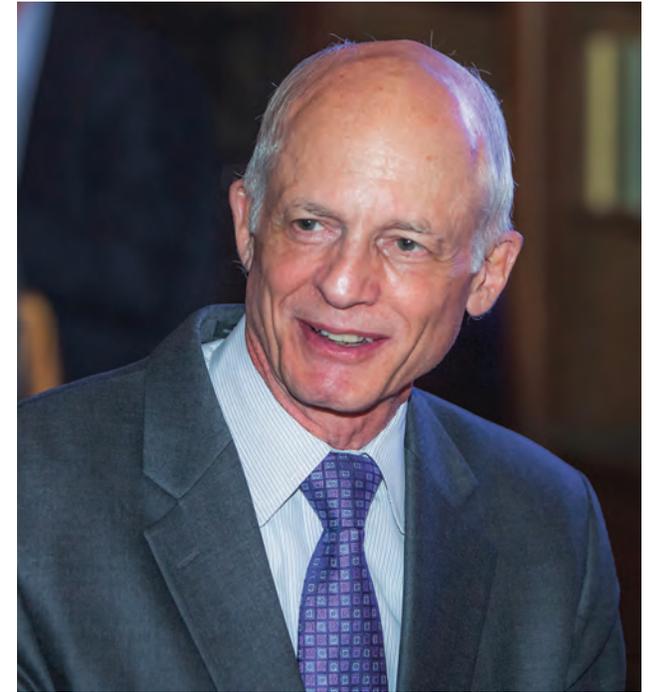
In 2017, we captured the attention of our trustee and academic leadership network with a signature project and report on how institutions prioritize their spending. It is an explosive topic. With courage, and calm, we looked at the national problem in higher education of ballooning administrative expenses relative to money spent on the real business of education—teaching and learning. Our signature report, *How Much is Too Much? Controlling Administrative Costs through Effective Oversight*, garnered favorable attention in top journals as a tool to provide hard data on spending patterns at over 1,100 schools. Schools are using this data to manage their budgets more prudently, and make wiser decisions for the good of those they serve. And we are now undertaking an ambitious project to extend the reach of our Project on Administrative Costs data.

ACTA strives to bring about the real changes that benefit students—and at scale. The past year has brought remarkable success. Our efforts to drive curricular improvement, through our What Will They Learn?TM project, are touching more and more schools and amplifying ACTA’s voice as a national leader in defending rigorous core standards. As is true for our work on accountability, we are striving to scale our effectiveness—and touch more college-bound lives—by expanding our communications to high school

guidance counselors. As we get close to finishing our database of 35,000, we hope to have more guidance counselors than ever before using the *What Will They Learn?* guide to help students and families see how vital a comprehensive set of core requirements is in educating undergraduates for success in career, citizenship, and community.

ACTA’s voice powerfully resounds, cutting through the noise, to resolve fractious matters of freedom of expression on campuses. The freedom of inquiry, thought, and speech that has been the glory of American higher education too often gives way to the silencing of those who challenge campus orthodoxies. ACTA is changing the campus conversation. When students silence invited speakers, we remind the trustees of the institution’s obligation to sanction severely such offenses and discourage their recurrence. We advise them, too, of the need proactively to prevent such disruptions and build a culture of free expression.

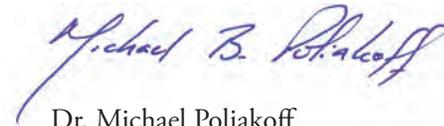
This year, we honored University of Chicago President Robert J. Zimmer with the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education for his visionary leadership in promoting freedom of expression on campus. And we have sent a copy of the magnificent address he gave at our 2017 ATHENA Roundtable to our network of 23,000 trustees—along with a copy of the Chicago Principles, a statement defending freedom of expression on campus—and urged all to join in this national movement.



Our Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR), a program that protects the intent of donors who wish to make gifts of enduring impact to support high quality liberal arts education, has had a superb year. FAR has distinguished itself as a leader in meaningful education giving: In 2017, FAR helped donors plan higher education gifts totaling more than \$8.5 million.

The Oases of Excellence initiative—which supports exceptional programs at colleges and universities that engage both students and the public with the rigorous study of American history, Western civilization, political theory, economics, capitalism, leadership, and the Great Books—is thriving. Our network now embraces 65 programs that are providing vital academic opportunities to university communities across the country.

We trust that our momentum will carry us forward in 2018 and beyond. With your continued help, we will touch more schools and improve more lives in the coming year. With our careful research and outreach, hard work, and high principles, we endeavor each day to honor the trust you have placed in us and to demonstrate our deep thanks to you for helping us meet the challenges of higher education in our nation.



Dr. Michael Poliakoff
President

Board of Directors

Robert T. Lewit, M.D., Chairman

CEO, Metropolitan Psychiatric Group (ret.)

John D. Fonte, Ph.D., Secretary

Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute
Visiting Scholar, American Enterprise Institute

George “Hank” Brown

Former U.S. Senator
Former President, University of Colorado

Jane Fraser

President, Stuttering Foundation of America

Edwin Meese III, Esq.

Former Attorney General of the United States
Former Rector, George Mason University

Carl B. Menges

Vice Chairman, Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette (ret.)
Trustee, New-York Historical Society
Founding Board Member, Alexander Hamilton Institute

Thomas M. Rollins

Founder, The Teaching Company

Terence P. Ross, Esq.

Partner, Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP

Sandra Stotsky, Ed.D.

Professor of Education Emerita, University of Arkansas

Edwin D. Williamson, Esq.

Partner, Sullivan & Cromwell, LLP (ret.)

Jody Wolfe

President, Mailman Foundation

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.

President, American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ex-officio)

Council of Scholars

George E. Andrews

Evan Pugh Professor of Mathematics,
Pennsylvania State University

Mark Bauerlein

Professor of English, Emory University

Marc Zvi Brettler

Bernice and Morton Lerner Professor of Judaic Studies,
Duke University

William Cook

Distinguished Teaching Professor and Emeritus
Professor of History, SUNY-Geneseo

Paul Davies

Professor of Philosophy, College of William & Mary

David C. Doughty, Jr.

Professor of Physics and Provost,
Christopher Newport University

William Fagan

Professor and Chair of Biology, University of Maryland

Judith Farr

Professor of English Emerita, Georgetown University

Niall Ferguson

Senior Fellow, Hoover Institute, Stanford University
Senior Fellow, Center for European Studies,
Harvard University

Sidney L. Gulick III

Professor of Mathematics, University of Maryland

Robert “KC” Johnson

Professor of History, CUNY-Brooklyn College

Anatoly M. Khazanov

Ernest Gellner Professor of Anthropology Emeritus,
University of Wisconsin; Fellow, British Academy

Alan Charles Kors

Henry Charles Lea Professor Emeritus of History,
University of Pennsylvania

Jon D. Levenson

Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies,
Harvard Divinity School

Molly Levine

Professor and Chair of Classics, Howard University

George R. Lucas, Jr.

Stockdale Chair in Ethics, U.S. Naval War College

Joyce Lee Malcolm

Patrick Henry Professor of Constitutional Law and the
Second Amendment, George Mason University
Fellow of the Royal Historical Society

Matthew A. Malkan

Professor of Astrophysics, UCLA

Michael Podgursky

Professor of Economics, University of Missouri

James A. Sellers

Professor and Associate Head for Undergraduate
Mathematics, Pennsylvania State University



CONTENTS

Impact 2

The Three “A’s” 4

Public Awareness 12

About Us 16

IMPACT 2017

ACTA advised over **220** institutions nationwide, representing more than **2.5 million** undergraduate students.

Over **1,100** trustees responded to our trustee engagement survey. **Nearly half** used ACTA's materials to address issues at their institutions.

ACTA made **761** appearances in print, broadcast, and online media—including newspapers in all **50** states and the U.K.

Over **40** institutions contacted ACTA to understand their spending patterns and how to rein in administrative costs using our guide *How Much is Too Much?*.

Over **90** trustees, representing more than **520,000** students, requested follow-up information about ACTA's *What Will They Learn?* report.

ACTA's Fund for Academic Renewal helped donors plan targeted higher education gifts totaling more than **\$8.5 million**.

28 schools strengthened their core requirements and raised their ratings in *What Will They Learn?*[™]

40+ higher education leaders from **17** states and the District of Columbia participated in ACTA's Oases of Excellence conference.

34 colleges, universities, or university systems adopted or adapted the Chicago Principles of free expression as of January 2018.

“ACTA plays an important role in bringing attention to fundamental issues in higher education. There is a profound need for its demonstrated focus on the ideals of liberal arts education and what is necessary to deliver such an education.”

— Dr. Robert J. Zimmer, President
University of Chicago



THE THREE “A’s”

- **A**ccountability
- **A**cademic Excellence
- **A**cademic Freedom

ACCOUNTABILITY

Fortifying Institutional Governance



In 2017, ACTA's influence resonated in the boardrooms and administrative offices of higher education institutions across the nation. Through seminars, consultations, and publications, we armed trustees and administrators with the critical guidance and research they needed to drive change on their campuses and exercise wise stewardship of institutional resources. We believe that colleges and universities are at their best when they uphold high academic standards, maximizing student outcomes while driving down administrative costs.

ACTA kicked off the year with a new report from our Institute for Effective Governance™, *Bold Leadership, Real Reform 2.0: Improving Efficiency, Cutting Costs, and Expanding College Opportunity*. Released in spring 2017, this guide inspired better decision-making in trustee boardrooms by providing “Blueprints for Reform.” Drawing from innovative institutions across the country, we called attention to new technologies, cost-cutting strategies, and shared course consortia from schools like Purdue University, Harvard University, and the University of Colorado. We outlined, point by point, how trustees can implement similar reforms that meet the specific needs of their institutions and student bodies. Our recommendations made a difference. The report was highlighted in *Education Dive* and *Ed Surge*, and schools, including Miami University of Ohio, reached out to ACTA to request our guidance at board retreats and high-level meetings.

One of our most important publications focused on the problem of runaway administrative spending in higher education, which has reached critical levels and diverts funds from the educational programs focused on student

learning. Our Project on Administrative Costs, with its July 2017 signature report *How Much is Too Much? Controlling Administrative Costs through Effective Oversight*, addressed this challenge head-on. ACTA's guide identified median ratios of administrative-to-instructional expense, and provided trustees with a new means for benchmarking their school's cost profile against those of other institutions.

How Much is Too Much? is changing the way trustees evaluate administrative spending: Over 40 institutions have used this guide to help them understand practical ways to rein in administrative costs and redirect resources to educational priorities. Our analyses provided good counsel to trustees from a major private research university in the Northeast, a multi-campus university system in the Midwest, and a state flagship institution in the Southeast, among many more. And trustees aren't the only leaders responding to our guidance: Presidents and chief financial officers have also used our report to review their spending patterns. The *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and the *Hechinger Report* highlighted our cost ratio as a unique and valuable tool that allows college trustees and

presidents to scrutinize their budgets clearly for administrative and instructional costs, and manage financial expenditures more prudently.

ACTA is passionate about our work on accountability because every adjustment that schools make to reallocate their budgets can potentially change the cost of college for students and the quality of education they receive. Our **Trustee Engagement Survey** conducted last summer, along with direct consultations performed throughout the year, generated reforms on campuses across the country. ACTA provided customized services to trustees who contacted us seeking practical guidance to help carry out their fiduciary duties. And we conducted board retreats at institutions nationwide, including one of the country's oldest Historically

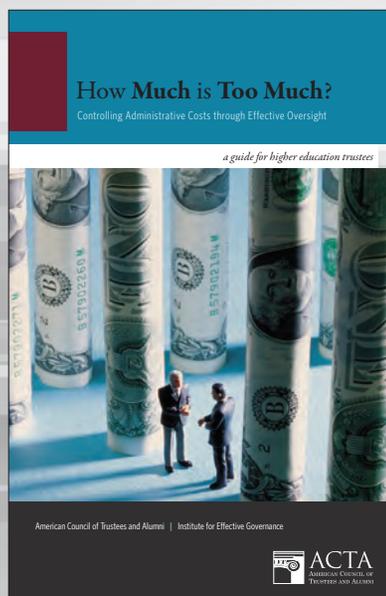
Black Colleges and Universities, a top-100 national university in *U.S. News and World Report*, and a private university on the East Coast with an over 150-year history.

Transforming Higher Education Policy

Activity surrounding the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) intensified in 2017, and ACTA significantly contributed to the discussion. At the heart of ACTA's mission is our concern over the coercive impact that the current accreditation system has on higher education governance. ACTA put accreditation at the forefront of the debate by educating policymakers on the shortcomings of the system, working with higher education stakeholders to identify

solutions, and forming coalitions with like-minded individuals and organizations.

Johns Hopkins University Press drew on ACTA's expertise, requesting ACTA Senior Fellow Anne Neal and Vice President for Trustee & Legislative Affairs Armand Alacbay to contribute a chapter to a forthcoming book entitled, *Accreditation on the Edge: Challenging Quality Assurance in Higher Education*. The chapter asserts that structural problems have led to the systemic failure of accreditation as a suitable tool to determine Title IV eligibility, and advocates for its replacement by a transparency-based system that would focus on empowering consumers while breaking the monopoly held by regional accreditors. *Accreditation on the Edge* is scheduled for release in Spring 2018.



ACTA's new guide helped over 40 institutions understand practical ways to rein in administrative costs and redirect resources to educational priorities. The *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and the *Hechinger Report* highlighted our cost ratio analysis as a unique and valuable tool.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

On Administrative Spending, Which Colleges Get the Most Bang for the Buck? July 25, 2017

“The goal of the study was not to set a specific target for each college but to make trustees aware of the data so that they can compare their own institutions to the trends within each

sector. . . . Armed with that knowledge, trustees should seek ways to make colleges more efficient while putting money into activities that improve student outcomes, the report urges.”

“Thank you for supporting academic leaders in their educational initiatives. The work we do today ensures a bright future for our students tomorrow.”

— Walter V. Wendler, President,
West Texas A&M University

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Driving Curricular Improvement



At the core of each project that ACTA pursues and each publication we release are undergraduate students and how we can ensure they receive a rigorous and comprehensive college education. This year, ACTA drove many institutions of higher education to honor wisely and well their commitments to provide their students a strong foundation in the liberal arts—through which the skills critical to success in life and career are built. We strive to safeguard the academic integrity of our colleges and universities so that students will graduate ready to meet the challenges of community and the workplace.

This year, the **What Will They Learn?**[™] project—our core initiative for academic excellence—impelled many colleges and universities to make curricular reform a top priority, and we provided the consultations to help make those improvements a reality. Our 2017–18 *What Will They Learn?* (WWTL) report evaluated over 1,100 public and private four-year institutions to determine if they offer seven core subjects essential to a well-rounded education—Composition, Literature, (intermediate-level) Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural Science. And this year, we partnered with Heterodox Academy (HxA) to include ratings on the level of viewpoint diversity at America’s top institutions.

Only 24 institutions earned an “A” grade for requiring six or more of **What Will They Learn?**[™] core subjects. But momentum is building for curricular improvement,

as an increasing number of colleges and universities responded to our call to strengthen their liberal arts requirements. Institutions reached out to ACTA to seek our recommendations on how to align their curricula with their liberal arts mission statements. Twenty-eight schools made positive grade changes in their core curricula, directly affecting close to 119,000 students. As a result of ACTA’s influence, for example, Lindenwood University in Missouri restored its general education requirement in U.S. history. Flagler College in Florida added a literature requirement to their core curriculum. Benedictine College created a more rigorous mathematics requirement. And yet more schools have initiatives underway in partnership with us to strengthen their requirements in the coming year. We have collaborated with trustees across the country to reform bloated curricula and establish comprehensive programs of study that truly benefit the students they enroll.

Providing Pathways for Prospective College Students

This year was also pivotal for our new pilot program to build a comprehensive database that will enable us to communicate directly with public and private high school guidance counselors. ACTA's hard-working interns laid the groundwork for connecting with this vital community, gathering and entering the information of over 20,000 counselors, with a view toward expanding the database to 35,000 counselors in the coming year. The long-term goal for this project is to work with guidance counselors who can use WWTL to educate students and their parents about the value

of schools that require an essential range of core disciplines covering mathematics, natural science, literature and composition, foreign language, history, and economics. Counselors serving more than half a million students have already requested copies of our *What Will They Learn?* report, and our resources helped them to provide the best counsel to prospective college students.

Along with a book signing event in 2017, we celebrated the release of *What's a Parent to Do? How to Help Your Child Select the Right College*, by Anne D. Neal, senior fellow and president emerita of ACTA. This new book provides a practical and sensible guide for students and their

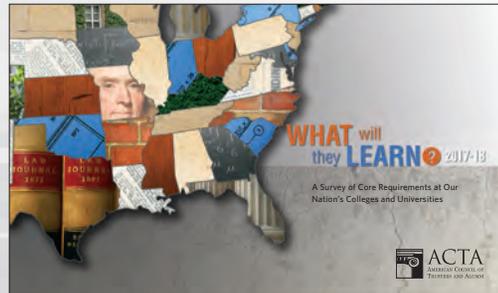
families as they navigate the college selection process. The book empowers families to uncover, looking past the blinding distractions of fancy dormitories, party cultures, and “pop” course offerings, the best institutions—those that put student learning and advancement at the forefront of their missions.

Fostering Oases of Excellence

ACTA's Oases of Excellence network identifies and supports distinguished academic centers which enrich students through the study of subjects like American history, the Great Books, and political theory. The network inspired an array of

ACTA's new comprehensive database of public and private high school guidance counselors helps provide *What Will They Learn?*, a survey of core requirements at 1,100+ institutions, as a resource to college-bound students.

Counselors serving more than **half a million** students have already requested copies of the report.



Does liberal arts education have an image problem? October 19, 2017

“Last year, the council conducted a survey of 1,100 US institutions with a stated liberal arts mission, encompassing both private and public institutions. It found that only small proportions required

students to take programmes in literature (35 per cent), US government or history (18 per cent), a foreign language (13 per cent) or economics (3 per cent).”

“A robust general education of the type that ACTA advocates . . . will empower success and significance in the lives of students. I see that every day on our campus in the lives of our graduates.”

— Paul Tribble, President,
Christopher Newport University;
former U.S. Senator

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE continued

new programs in 2017. Our noteworthy designation has now been conferred on 65 institutions, including this year the Eric Voegelin Institute at Louisiana State University, the Center for the Study of Government and the Individual at the University of Colorado–Colorado Springs, The Freedom Project at Wellesley College, the Churchill Institute for the Study and Extension of Western Civilization at Trinity College, and the American University Center for Innovation. Our John Roderick Wilson Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference in June, sponsored by ACTA and the Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR), helped to foster this growth. Over 40 higher education leaders from 17 states, who were eager to enhance existing programs and build new ones, attended this conference and requested additional Oases of Excellence meetings in 2018.

Empowering Alumni: The Fund for Academic Renewal

ACTA recognizes that alumni have an essential role to play in fostering academic reform. One crucial way alumni make a difference is by directing their philanthropic gifts to truly meritorious academic programs and faculty who advance the discussion of important issues from different perspectives. That is why ACTA expanded its **Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR)**



Jenna Silber Storey, managing director of the Tocqueville Program at Furman University, shares effective strategies with over 40 higher education leaders from 17 states at the Oases of Excellence conference hosted by ACTA and FAR.

ACTA's Oases of Excellence network identifies and supports distinguished academic centers which enrich students through the study of subjects like American history, the Great Books, and political theory.

The network now includes 65 institutions.

just over a year ago. Funded with a generous grant from the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, FAR offers a full suite of complimentary services for college donors and their advisors to ensure their gifts achieve an enduring impact.

In its first full year of expansion, FAR has emerged as the leader in targeted higher education giving. FAR supports donors in structuring their gift agreements to protect donor intent and maximize opportunities for donor-funded programs to support academic excellence. FAR, for example, was honored to assist University of Vermont donor Angelo Pizzagalli as he endowed the Pizzagalli Chair of Free Enterprise. FAR helped him to craft a gift that would expand opportunities to study

in-depth free enterprise, entrepreneurship, and the role of capitalism in a free and open society.

FAR also assists donors in identifying programs that align with their values and philanthropic goals. This was the case for one donor, who came to FAR wondering about schools that he might support other than his wealthy alma mater. FAR introduced him to the Furman University's Society of Tocqueville Fellows, a program that deepens undergraduates' understanding of the Western and American philosophic tradition.

In addition to customized services for individual donors, FAR announced the creation of its five Special Purpose Funds to allow donors to

support programming in crucial subject areas. FAR offers Special Purpose Funds in these essential areas: American History, Government & Statesmanship; Western Tradition; Science & Mathematics; and Economic Literacy—as well as a Free to Teach, Free to Learn Fund, which focuses on the cultivation of intellectual diversity and free expression. Contributions to FAR's Special Purpose Funds will be pooled and may support ACTA's Oases of Excellence, as well as other outstanding programs and institutes led by distinguished liberal arts faculty.

In 2017, FAR helped donors to plan higher education gifts totaling more than \$8.5 million.

“FAR’s guidance led us to insert provisions in the gift agreement that we would never have thought of. These provisions will ensure that my objectives for the gift will be honored by the University for many years to come.”

— **Angelo Pizzagalli** on establishing the Pizzagalli Chair of Free Enterprise at the Grossman School of Business at the University of Vermont

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Invigorating Open Discourse



ACTA is well-known for sounding the call to defend academic freedom, intellectual diversity, and the robust exchange of ideas on college and university campuses. But 2017 wasn't just a year of alerting the public. It was a year of generating results, as many colleges and universities instituted firm policies to protect freedom of speech. The opportunity to engage critical perspectives from across the spectrum of opinion and to express thought without fear of censorship is essential to a deeply-rooted liberal arts education and a dynamic life of the mind. Brilliant ideas do not simply spring up; they are sparked, altered, and nourished by debate and challenge. That is why ACTA believes colleges and universities must defend the free expression of their students, professors, and guests with great resolve. In 2017, we strengthened academic freedom on campuses across the country through outreach to trustees and presidents, correspondence with governing boards, and extensive distribution of our publications.

In March, we released *Campus Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and the Problem of the BDS Movement*, calling for protection of academic freedom against the silencing of diverse opinions by the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. This issue epitomizes the destructive trend on college campuses to devolve into a battleground where opinions with which some disagree are forcibly drowned-out, never to be challenged or debated. We recommended strategies to help college leaders maintain institutional neutrality on controversial questions while ensuring that a wide range of political thought can be expressed. Our recommendations gained traction, as over 100 trustees came forward with requests for additional resources, and a number of media outlets, including *Inside Higher Ed*, featured our findings.

Academic freedom is more important now than ever. Speakers and professors from across the political spectrum were silenced on campuses this year—notably at Middlebury College, Evergreen State College, and Berkeley—effectively shutting down any meaningful debate. We are meeting this challenge with invaluable insights and practical guidance. ACTA made significant progress in advancing academic freedom by urging our trustee network to adopt or adapt the principles set forth by the University of Chicago's Committee on Freedom of Expression. We distributed the "Chicago Principles" to higher education leaders across the country, encouraging them to join the University of Chicago as fierce defenders of this freedom that helps to cultivate liberal arts education.

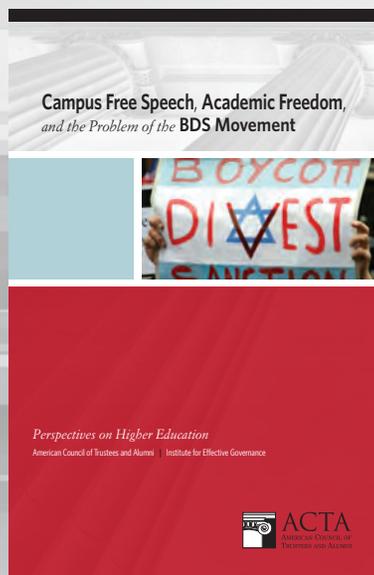
Persuading Leaders, Galvanizing Change

College leaders are heeding ACTA's advice to craft policies to protect free speech. To date, 34 colleges, universities, or university systems have adopted the Chicago Principles or similar statements—including Ashland University, Franklin & Marshall College, Georgetown University, University of Montana, Kansas State University, Kenyon College, University of Denver, Appalachian State University, State University of New York–Buffalo, and Denison University—and we are working closely with many more to preserve the long-held status of the American university as the stronghold of intellectual freedom.

We helped galvanize the movement for academic freedom by publishing *Liberal Arts, Free Expression, and the Demosthenes-Feynman Trap*, the speech that University of Chicago President Robert J. Zimmer delivered upon his acceptance of ACTA's Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. President Zimmer eloquently defines freedom of expression as inextricable from a meaningful liberal arts education. Institutions that are committed to defending intellectual freedom and open discourse have the best ability to provide students with the “liberating skills” that free our minds from self-deception, logical fallacies, and faulty reasoning. ACTA believes that students who graduate with

the ability to confront controversial and even offensive opinions, with nuanced responses, and who can engage in dialogue with those from a diversity of backgrounds will be prepared to participate in civic life and serve our nation as good and thoughtful leaders.

ACTA applauds President Zimmer's words: “For the sake of today's students and those who will follow them, we must reaffirm our commitment to the spirit of the liberating skills, to the liberal arts, and to the free and open discourse and questioning that lie at their core.”



ACTA urged trustees across the nation to protect academic freedom against the silencing of diverse opinions by the BDS movement. Our *Campus Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and the Problem of the BDS Movement* report recommended strategies for college leaders to ensure the free exchange of ideas on campus. Over 100 trustees requested further resources on the topic, and the press featured our findings.

**INSIDE
HIGHER ED**

Governing Against BDS
March 9, 2017

“A new report that's highly critical of the boycott campaign argues that governing boards must also play a role in such discussions and ultimately act as a backstop for academic freedom.”

“The ACTA analysis of the BDS movement and academic freedom on university campuses is superb. . . . This essay is a reliable reference work for governing boards.”

— Mark G. Yudof, President Emeritus,
University of California; former Chancellor,
University of Texas System

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Making Headlines, Spreading the Word



In 2017, ACTA's vital voice reverberated strongly in national and regional media. Nearly every week, we responded to reporters seeking insights and commentary on late-breaking issues in higher education governance, academic freedom, trustee best practices, and much more. This year, we made a total of 761 media appearances in print, broadcast, and online, in venues that reached a vast audience that spanned all 50 states and the United Kingdom. ACTA's accomplishments and expertise were featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *New York Times*, *National Review Online*, *Washington Examiner*, *Boston Herald*, and many more outlets across the country.

Our trailblazing research on college governance accountability, *How Much is Too Much? Controlling Administrative Costs through Effective Oversight*, received extensive coverage in news outlets prominent in the higher education sphere: The report's new financial assessment strategies were covered in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Campus Technology*, the *Hechinger Report*, and many others. In the *Chronicle's* piece, Barnak Nassirian of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities gave the report high marks for supplying a "thoughtful tone on a topic that tends to evoke a lot of heated rhetoric."

Our social media presence continues to be felt, and we are gaining new followers. Our Twitter channel generated almost 700,000 impressions this year, and our website amassed nearly 45,000 unique visitors—a 17% increase over the previous year.

Our podcast, **Higher Ed Now**, was downloaded over 3,000 times in 2017. The podcast has featured some of the most prominent experts in higher education today, including publisher and philanthropist David Bruce Smith, George Washington University President Emeritus Stephen J. Trachtenberg, University Ventures Co-Founder Daniel Pianko, University Innovation Alliance Executive Director Bridget Burns, and former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the late Bruce Cole.

Reaching the Higher Education Community

Trustees. Our growing network contains trustees from nearly every four-year institution across the country offering a liberal arts degree. We continue to offer guidance and support to our nation's fiduciaries, and reach over 23,000 trustees at nearly 1,300 institutions.

Alumni. Our quarterly newsletter *Inside Academe* reaches more than 13,000 alumni from a wide scope of colleges and universities. And over 3,000 alumni receive our monthly eNewsletters as well as email updates about our latest initiatives, events, and achievements.

Governors and State Policymakers. ACTA regularly reaches out to all 50 governors and their education policy staffs, as well as to many state policymakers and legislators.

ATHENA Roundtable

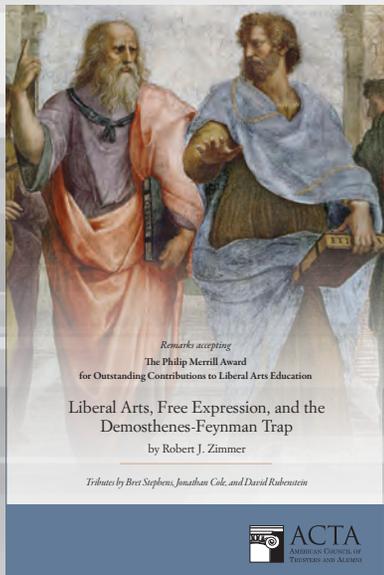
ACTA's October 2017 ATHENA conference attracted a stellar array of higher education experts, trustees, and alumni. The event featured

some of the most prominent innovators and scholars in the higher education sphere today. Free speech, fearless leadership, accreditation overhaul, and the alarming controversies facing our colleges and universities were but few of the topics passionately examined at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center.

The Roundtable's first panel delved into the heated debate over academic freedom, featuring Allison Stanger, professor of politics and economics at Middlebury College, who was assaulted by protesters when she hosted Charles Murray for a lecture and discussion; Walter Kimbrough, president of Dillard University and powerful defender of academic freedom; Dr. Steven Benner, distinguished professor of bioscience, who

previously served as a student member of the 1974 Woodward Committee on Freedom of Expression at Yale; and Philip Hamburger, legal historian and constitutional law scholar at Columbia Law School.

The participants on the second panel focused on the vast challenges of college and university management, and engaged the audience in consideration of practical proposals for innovation. Ground-breaking ideas are being implemented at Purdue by Michael Berghoff, chairman of the University's board of trustees; incorporated into the core curriculum at Pepperdine by Chancellor Michael Adams; channeled to serve undergraduates more cost-effectively by University of Colorado Regent Stephen Ludwig;



It was a heated year for free speech conflicts. Campus leaders and students contended with shout downs, violent uprisings, and the costly need for police and security forces. ACTA was a galvanizing force for speaking truthfully, powerfully, and articulately on these issues.

ACTA presented our Merrill Award to University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer, for his work in forging a consensus on the Chicago Principles on free expression. ACTA urges schools to adopt these principles and to that end sent President Zimmer's speech and the principles to over 23,000 trustees across the country.

The morning after ACTA's event, Bret Stephens, a Chicago alumnus and tribute speaker at our gala, published his remarks in the *New York Times*.

“If free speech—never a popular idea to start with— isn't actively defended, it will rapidly be eroded. For using the prestige of his office to make the case both brilliant and blunt, [President Zimmer] has become the most essential voice in American academia today.”

— Bret Stephens, *New York Times*, October 21, 2017

PUBLIC AWARENESS continued

and applied fundamentally to reform the accreditation system by Anne Neal, ACTA senior fellow and president emerita. These conversations, which inspired deep engagement with our audience in a robust Q&A session, were followed by a rousing keynote address by Paul Tribble, president of Christopher Newport University, the only public university in the nation to earn a perfect “A” from ACTA for its core curriculum.

2017 Merrill Award

The Chicago Principles continue to sweep the nation as many colleges and universities awaken to the urgency of defending free expression and the liberal arts in academia and on campus. This movement has flourished under Robert J. Zimmer, president of the University of Chicago and this year’s recipient of the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. Dr. Zimmer leads one of the highest-ranked universities in the world with an unfaltering commitment to the robust and free exchange of ideas that both challenges and enriches students, professors, and the public.

His acceptance speech, *Liberal Arts, Free Expression, and the Demosthenes-Feynman Trap*, was preceded by vivid tributes from *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens, whose remarks were published in that newspaper immediately following the event; Jonathan Cole, professor and provost emeritus of Columbia University; and David Rubenstein, philanthropist and co-founder and co-CEO of The Carlyle Group.



Oases of Excellence students Beckett Rueda (Skidmore), Delvin Ergott (Mercyhurst), and Rachel Wagner and Hannah Jackson (Christopher Newport), who attended the ATHENA Roundtable events through the generosity of ACTA patrons.

“Thank you so much for making this opportunity possible for myself and the other CNU students. I found the event to be inspiring, insightful, and one of the highlights of my semester.”

— Rachel Wagner, student,
Christopher Newport University

ATHENA ROUNDTABLE and MERRILL AWARD GALA



Catherine Rampell



Paul Fain, Michael Adams, Michael Berghoff, Anne Neal, and Stephen Ludwig



Walter Kimbrough



David Rubenstein



Robert Zimmer



Donald Kagan and Steven Benner



Allison Stanger and Philip Hamburger



Paul Tribble



Bret Stephens



Jonathan Cole

ABOUT US



Our Staff

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.
President

Lauri Kempson
Senior Vice President

Karen Hyman
Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs

Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Fund for Academic Renewal

Armand Alacbay, Esq.
Vice President of Trustee & Legislative Affairs

Michael Deshaies
Vice President of Development & Strategic Partnerships

Douglas Sprei
Director of Communications

Ryan Sabot
Associate Director of Development

Nick Barden
Administrative Director

Megan Riethmiller
Director of Curricular Improvement

Christine Ravold
Communications Officer & Digital Media Producer

Shaun Rieley
Program Officer for Trustee & Legislative Affairs

Joe DeGraff
Program Manager for the Fund for Academic Renewal

Elise Denman
Executive Administrative Assistant

Andrew Brackbill
Program Associate for Development

Elliott Cole
Program Associate for Communications

Brianna Suggs
Program Associate for Trustee & Legislative Affairs

Greta Wagley
Research Associate / Editor

Senior Fellow and President Emerita Anne D. Neal

ACTA continues to benefit from the expertise of our senior fellow, Anne Neal. Ms. Neal is a co-founder of ACTA and served as our president from 2003 to 2016. Her work on higher education reform, particularly on accreditation as a member of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, is destined to change significantly the system of quality assurance in higher education. We were honored to

feature her vast insight at our 2017 ATHENA Roundtable conference on a panel devoted to developing greater accountability in college and university governance.

Interns and Lewit Fellows

ACTA's internship program offers a unique educational experience to talented college students and recent graduates. Our spring and summer interns perform critical research on the What Will They Learn?TM project as well as other key research, outreach, and writing tasks, including the development of our new guidance

counselor database. Our Robert Lewit Fellowship in Education Policy offers select students the opportunity to engage in special writing and research projects. Interns and fellows also experience the joys of vigorous dialogue through our summer speaker series, which invites eminent scholars to address our interns on important topics in higher education. This year's interns met with leaders including The Honorable Bruce Cole, the late chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and internationally acclaimed art historian, and Jerry Malitz, former chief information technology officer of the Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences.

Donors and Donor Societies

The generosity of ACTA's many supporters empowers us to do our important work, and because we do not receive government funding, it enables us to maintain our intellectual independence. Members of ACTA's donor societies are invited to exclusive events throughout the year, where they meet important and influential scholars and higher-ed reform leaders. We appreciate these opportunities to get to know our donor society members and to hear their concerns about the future of American higher education.

In June, longtime ACTA friend Stanley Stillman hosted ACTA at the Union Club in New York City for a dinner salon. New-York Historical Society President and CEO Louise Mirror, ACTA's 2014 Merrill Award recipient, spoke about the work of her organization and the important programming it provides to ensure that our youngest generation—students in elementary and middle schools—are exposed to historical and civic education.

ACTA regularly holds special events featuring prominent education leaders as a way to thank those who support our work.



“Your standard for attracting brilliant, fascinating and exquisite intellect around a dinner table is a rare gift. As it was on translucent display again . . . this week. I treasure these wonderful evenings.”

— John M. Danielson, President and CEO, Chartwell Education Group, after attending an ACTA donor salon in Richmond, VA

ABOUT US continued

2017 Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as of December 31, 2017

Assets

Cash/Cash Equivalents (unrestricted)	\$ 747,107
Cash/Cash Equivalents (restricted)	95,200
CDs (unrestricted)	1,241,305
CDs (restricted) - FAR	923,244
Marketable Securities	3,160,989
Receivables	64,357
Prepayments/Other Assets	46,024
Property/Equipment (Net)	<u>115,805</u>

Total Assets **6,394,031**

Liabilities & Net Assets

Accounts Payable	90,190
Deferred Income	25,000
Deferred Rent	<u>241,583</u>

Total Liabilities **356,773**

Unrestricted Net Assets	5,043,814
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	<u>993,444</u>

Total Net Assets **6,037,258**

Total Liabilities & Net Assets **\$6,394,031**

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES as of December 31, 2017

Revenue & Support

Contributions/Grants (unrestricted)	\$2,546,692
Grants (restricted)	133,814
Interest & Dividends	126,988
Miscellaneous Income	56,647
Realized/Unrealized Gains	<u>268,514</u>

Total Revenue & Support **3,132,655**

Expenses

Programs	2,812,024
Fundraising	22,178
Management/General	<u>157,313</u>

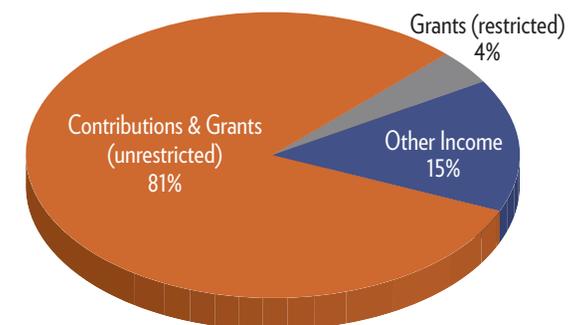
Total Expenses **2,991,515**

Change in Net Assets **141,140**

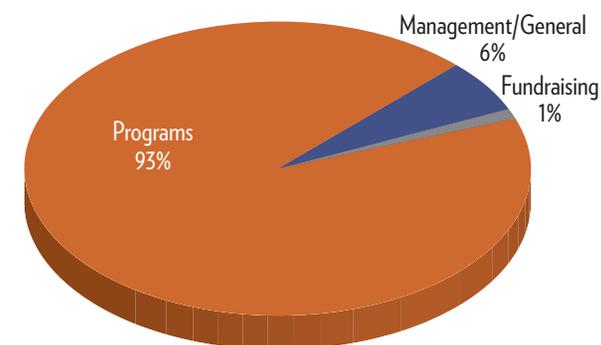
Net Assets, beginning of year **5,896,118**

Net Assets, end of year **\$6,037,258**

2017 OPERATING REVENUE



2017 OPERATING EXPENSES





IN MEMORIAM

Elizabeth Capaldi Phillips

Joe R.G. Fulcher

Peter Augustine Lawler

Michael Novak

John Roderick Wilson



ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

American Council of Trustees and Alumni
1730 M Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 1-888-ALUMNI-8 or 202-467-6787
Fax: 202-467-6784

Email: info@GoACTA.org • Website: www.GoACTA.org