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### From the Bookshelf

## What Happens at College *Doesn't Stay* at College 2019 ATHENA Roundtable: The Current Campus and Its Impact on Society

ACTA's 2019 ATHENA Roundtable was a great success, bringing together a dynamic group of expert panelists and 100+ college leaders, trustees, students, and alumni to share ideas and aspirations for the future of higher education. As civic illiteracy continues to mount and many graduates lack the skills to be successful in the workplace, this year's Roundtable focused on making undergraduate curricula more rigorous and increasing the affordability of college tuition so that more students have the opportunity to receive an education of value.

*Inside Higher Ed* reporter **Rick Seltzer** moderated the first panel, "How Colleges Spend Money and Why It Matters." **Eugene Hickok**, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education, opened the panel by outlining how commoditization has "removed the soul" from higher education. Co-driven by both students and institutions, the view of a college education as a consumer product has kept costs high and returns low. **Mark Yudof**, president emeritus of the University of California, noted the

decrease in public funding and how personnel costs, light faculty teaching loads, and the explosion of administrative staffing are driving up tuition prices, even when delivery costs per credit hour remain steady.

To address these challenges, University



Former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education, Eugene Hickok, and President Emeritus of the University of California, Mark Yudof, discuss how colleges spend money and why it matters at ACTA's ATHENA Roundtable.

of Colorado Regent **Heidi Ganahl** shared her innovative strategies for reducing costs so that more students are able to pursue the American Dream. She emphasized the importance of a degree structure that allows undergraduates to receive an education and job experience concurrently. On the legislative side, Virginia Senator Chap Petersen spoke about his work to require colleges to

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## The Present Danger at Our Leading Universities



### José A. Cabranes, United States Circuit Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit

Remarks Accepting the 2019 Philip Merrill Award:

#### *The Present Danger at Our Leading Universities: What is to be Done?*

Judge Cabranes's captivating speech exposed the threat to American higher education that the destructive synergy of non-academic administrators and student activists presents. He called on faculty, trustees, and donors to reassert the university's true mission of intellectual virtue, reflection, and freedom to pursue truth wherever it may lead. Visit [GoACTA.org](http://GoACTA.org) or call ACTA for a copy.

[www.GoACTA.org](http://www.GoACTA.org)

[info@GoACTA.org](mailto:info@GoACTA.org)

1-888-ALUMNI-8

**Louise Mirrer, President and CEO  
New-York Historical Society**

“Once again, your finger was perfectly positioned on the pulse of higher education today. I was glad to be part of a panel whose breadth and depth of experience and intellect not only motivated interesting and thoughtful conversation, but new ideas as well. It has been, as I said at the start of my remarks, a privilege to engage in ACTA’s important and consequential work over so many years. Congratulations and thank you!”

**Gabriel Rhys Simerson, Director of Communications  
Students for Free Expression, American University  
Washington, DC**

“Just wanted to say thank you again for having me at ATHENA this year—I enjoyed every minute and left energized. It was an honor.”

**Barbara and Irving Cohen  
Silver Spring, Maryland**

“As grandparents, we are faced with the popular notion that post high school education must result in obtaining a bachelor’s degree with a clear-cut immediate path to an employment opportunity. In the decision-making process, we hear very little about the intellectual tools that are the key focus of ACTA’s work. . . . Our very best wishes for ACTA’s continued success. We are in desperate need of a strong, significant cadre of well-rounded educated citizens if as a country we are to survive.”

**Amy Fahey, Fellow, Thomas More College  
Merrimack, NH**

“I am writing from Thomas More College of Liberal Arts to express how delighted we are to receive an “A” rating from ACTA, and to be included in the listing of A-rated colleges in the *What Will They Learn?* guide. . . . Thank you for recognizing our commitment to academic excellence.”

**Ryan Pemberton, Director  
Wilson Center for Leadership, Hampden-Sydney College  
Hampden Sydney, VA**

“Thanks for having me! I had a great time. What a fantastic group. We are humbled to be a part of the Oases network. Thanks for all you and the team did to put together a great conference.”

**Gregory McBrayer, Director, Core Curriculum  
Ashland University, Ashland, Ohio**

“Many thanks for inviting me to be a part of the [FAR Oases of Excellence] conference. I learned a lot and made some great connections. ACTA is doing great work advancing the cause of a true liberal arts education. The panels were fantastic—Christine Basil of Belmont Abbey, Shilo Brooks of the University of Colorado, and Steven Frankel of Xavier University all offered models for promoting liberal education worthy of emulation. David Corey’s speech on the goals of liberal education was inspiring! Surely hope to see you all in the future.”

**ATHENA Roundtable 2019, continued from 1**

advertise their tuition rate increases before implementation. Public comment periods make price hikes more transparent and give taxpayers the opportunity to evaluate if colleges are spending their money wisely. ACTA Vice President of Trustee & Government Affairs **Armand Alacbay** demonstrated **HowCollegesSpendMoney.com**, a vital tool created by ACTA to help solve the college cost crisis that provides trustees and the public with easily-accessible data on institutions’ spending decisions.

The second panel, led by Pulitzer Prize winning *Washington Post* columnist **Kathleen Parker**, explored the return on investment of a liberal arts education. Long-time trustee and entrepreneur **John Altman** explained how the liberal

arts serve as a bedrock for participatory democracy by instilling a spirit of humility and teaching principles of liberty. **Jon Parrish Peede**, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, noted that companies are willing to provide employees with technical training, but are not so eager to re-do four years of critical thinking instruction that is best gained through a liberal education. New-York Historical Society President and CEO **Louise Mirrer** shared how the Society reinvigorates the teaching of the liberal arts, bringing students and instructors back into contact with authentic history by interacting with physical documents.

**Pano Kanelos**, president of St. John’s College—Annapolis, rejected the perception of a binary tension between the lib-

eral arts and practical skills, noting how a liberal education combines professional training with personal understanding. He explained his vision of an interdisciplinary three-year degree. To ensure that the ROI of a liberal arts education remains high, **Ali Eskandarian**, Executive Director of ACTA’s Fund for Academic Renewal, commented on the critical role of donors who target their gifts to support a renewal of the highest academic standards on college campuses. **Samuel Abrams**, professor of politics at Sarah Lawrence College, delivered luncheon keynote remarks on how to address the growing number of college administrators who actively discourage intellectual diversity on campus. The keynote was followed by a colloquy led by panelist Mark Yudof,

(continued on 6)

## ACTA Civics Survey Sounds the Alarm About College Standards

In concurrence with the 2019-2020 *What Will They Learn?* report, ACTA commissioned a national survey, released in September, that drew new attention to America's crisis in civic understanding and the urgent need for renewed focus on civic education. The survey results were featured across the country in such diverse outlets as the *Washington Times* and *Crain's New York Business*.

America's Knowledge Crisis: A Survey of Civic Literacy, conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, tested the civic knowledge of a nationally representative sample of Americans with a series of questions on foundational events in U.S. history and key political principles. While many Americans have strong opinions about the Supreme Court, the survey found that a full 15% of college graduates believe that Brett Kavanaugh is the current chief justice of the Supreme Court, and another 16% think the chief justice is the late Antonin Scalia. Fewer than half of respondents correctly identified John Roberts. Twenty percent of college graduates believe either Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), a freshman member of the current Congress, or the late President Lyndon Johnson was the architect of the New Deal—a suite of public programs enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s. Even more alarming, fewer than half of college graduates surveyed could correctly identify the term lengths for members of Congress—in a multiple choice question. And only 19% of college graduates correctly answered that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment freed all the slaves in the United States.

These results are indeed tragic, but not surprising. ACTA's *What Will They Learn?* report has found that only 18% of colleges and universities require students to take a course in American government or history. With training in basic civic and historical knowledge removed from the classroom, the future of our democracy is tenuous. Colleges and universities must reverse the steady deterioration in academic standards by requiring all students to gain a fundamental understanding of our nation's history and political institutions. ●



ACTA releases its new civic knowledge survey.

18% of Americans believe Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is the architect of the New Deal.

Test your own knowledge at [GoACTA.org](http://GoACTA.org).



Reprinted with permission of David DiFilippo, *The Wilson Times*.



## Wallace Hall Receives Trustee Prize for His Courageous Leadership

On Thursday, October 17, close friends of ACTA gathered for a dinner at the Cosmos Club in Washington, DC, to honor Wallace Hall with the 2019 **Jerry L. Martin Prize for Excellence in College Trusteeship**. Mr. Hall served on the Board of Regents of the University of Texas System from 2011 to 2017 and worked tirelessly to expose admissions corruption at the university.

Accusations were made that he was overstepping his role as a trustee, and unsuccessful impeachment inquiries were brought against him. In 2015, his claims were validated when an investigation found widespread admissions corruption, and were made all the more salient in 2019 when Operation Varsity Blues brought admissions fraud to the national forefront.

The Jerry L. Martin Prize—named after ACTA’s first president—was created to honor leaders like Mr. Hall who set a high standard for accountable and honest university trusteeship. In his acceptance speech, Mr. Hall urged trustees to provide principled and active leadership as governors of their institutions, saying, “Remember that one of the nation’s largest public universities went to such lengths simply to prevent transparency and accountability in its admissions practices and other operations.”

Mr. Hall also had high praise for ACTA’s work to provide trustees with best practices: “I can comfortably say that there is not an organization in America better suited to promote, defend, and educate trustees on our mission than ACTA.”



We thank Mr. Hall for his courage to stand up for truth and accountability at our nation’s colleges and universities. ●

## Tom Ridge Discusses Academic Freedom with Trustees



Governor Tom Ridge with ACTA President Michael Poliakoff at ACTA trustee seminar on academic freedom.

This fall, ACTA held its second regional seminar for trustees, this time at Allegheny College in Meadville, PA. The event, “A Campus Culture of Intellectual Freedom: How Trustees Can Help,” was supported by the James and Amy Bennett Foundation and featured sessions on promoting free speech on campus as well as keynote remarks by former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge. Trustees from institutions including Capital University (OH), Edinboro University (PA), and Indiana University of Pennsylvania, among others, attended the seminar to find ways to ensure that free expression, viewpoint diversity, and the robust exchange of ideas are allowed to flourish on their campuses.

The seminar sessions led by ACTA President Michael Poliakoff informed participants about the historical development of challenges to free speech and the importance of free expression to the purpose of higher education. Participants also explored different ways that universities have codified the protection of

free expression into their missions and policies, including Yale University’s groundbreaking C. Vann Woodward Report and the University of Chicago’s Principles of Freedom of Expression. Participants learned about the free speech policies that best fit public and private institutions as well as how to address the particular problems trustees face as they work within state systems and with state government.

*(continued on 5)*

## ACTA Launches New What Will They Learn?<sup>®</sup> Website with 2019–2020 Ratings

The results of ACTA's 2019–2020 *What Will They Learn?* report are in, and have gained nationwide media coverage. This year's report garnered the attention of Missouri Governor Mike Parson, who congratulated the state's Southwest Baptist University for earning an "A" rating for its outstanding general education curriculum.

Unlike other ranking systems, which focus on prestige instead of academic quality, *What Will They Learn?* assesses the core curriculum requirements of 1,123 four-year institutions across the country, assigning grades on an "A"–"F" scale based on whether they require all students to take courses in seven essential subject areas as part of their general education programs. These liberal arts subjects—including Composition, Literature, (intermediate-level) Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural Science—are foundational elements of a collegiate education that adequately prepares students for success in their careers and communities.

This year's survey found that 82% of schools assessed do not require students to take a foundational course in U.S. Government or History, 68% do not require their students to study literature, and a staggering 97% fail to require an economics course. These gaps in academic training matter in the workplace: In survey after survey, employers express dissatisfaction with graduates' workforce readiness, noting a lack of skills essential to the 21<sup>st</sup> century job market, including the capacity for critical thinking, oral and written communication

skills, and problem solving skills.

With the knowledge of what employers seek in new hires, students and their families can choose institutions that are meeting this challenge. There are many colleges highlighted in *What Will They Learn?* which offer a degree that signifies a high-level of academic proficiency and job-preparedness. Twenty-two

schools nationwide receive an "A" grade for requiring 6–7 of the core subjects, and 350 institutions receive a "B" rating for requiring 4–5 subjects. This list of excellent institutions that students should consider includes Baylor University, Pepperdine University, the University of Dallas, St. John's College, and Christopher Newport University, among many more.

This year's report was accompanied with the launch

of a new **WhatWillTheyLearn.com** website, which makes it possible for students and parents to compare schools' core curricula, graduation rates, and tuition costs to find institutions that offer a robust return on their investment. The site also offers a range of resources for high school counselors to help them guide students in their college search. Interviews with influential business leaders including Arne Sorenson, CEO of Marriott International, and Andrés Gluski, CEO of AES Corporation, are featured on the site to give students an inside look at what employers expect from college graduates.

To find more college selection resources and to see what grade your alma mater received in the 2019–2020 report, visit [WhatWillTheyLearn.com](http://WhatWillTheyLearn.com). ●



Searching for the right college can be difficult. **WhatWillTheyLearn.com** can help you. Visit our website and take a look at the school pages, or use our comparison builder to evaluate several schools at a glance.

### Tom Ridge, *continued from 4*

In his remarks, Governor Ridge, former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, underscored the critical importance of free speech in our democracy, noting, "There is no more protective freedom than the freedom of expression." To uphold this freedom, the seminar examined ways to transform campus culture to create an environment that encourages frequent and

robust dialogue about ideas from across the political spectrum. Participants noted Purdue University's innovative free speech orientation and looked at ways to implement similar programs at their schools.

The response to the seminar has been encouraging, with one trustee immediately writing to his institution's president urging implementation of the action steps

outlined at the conference, and another using the materials to set the issue of free speech policies on the agenda of his board's Integrity & Compliance Committee. ACTA applauds the work of trustees who are using their unique position on governing boards to make their campuses places where freedom of expression can flourish. ●

# ATHENA Roundtable 2019 (cont'd)

## ATHENA Roundtable Conference



Kathleen Parker



Heidi Ganahl, Chap Petersen, and Armand Alacbay



Rick Seltzer



Edwin Williamson



Samuel Abrams



Pano Kanelos, Louise Mirrer, John Altman, and Jon Parrish Peede

### ATHENA Roundtable 2019, continued from 2

chair of the Academic Engagement Network, a nonprofit that works to counter anti-Semitism and promote free expression on campus. The interactive exchange between Mr. Yudof, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff, and the audience examined the problematic behavior of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement as it attempts to silence viewpoints on campus that are supportive of Israel, and was an engaging conclusion to an inspiring ATHENA Roundtable. ●

## Hero of Intellectual Freedom

Professor of politics at Sarah Lawrence College, **Samuel Abrams**, delivered thought-provoking keynote remarks at ACTA's 2019 ATHENA Roundtable. Professor Abrams was recognized as ACTA's first Hero of Intellectual Freedom for his efforts to promote free inquiry and academic freedom, despite the hostility he has encountered at Sarah Lawrence College. In a 2018 article in the *New York Times* titled "Think Professors Are Liberal? Try School Administrators," Professor Abrams presented his research on the lack of political diversity among college administrators and called on higher education leaders to address this growing threat to the open exchange of ideas. For these

remarks, he was met with vicious protests from students, some of whom vandalized his office door and demanded a review of his tenure. In response, Professor Abrams has stood firm and welcomed constructive dialogue with his critics, showing by example how to make campuses places where students and faculty alike can pursue knowledge and truth without fear of censorship.

Opening his keynote address, Professor Abrams said, "Standing up for free speech and intellectual diversity doesn't make me brave, it makes me a responsible academic and teacher." He painted a vivid picture of college students' thirst for exposure to diverse ideas and their unhappiness with the

status quo of censorship and speech codes. Professor Abrams explained that, rather than faculty and students, it is the explosion of ideologically homogenous college administrators that is driving the suppression of speech on campus.

Professor Abrams commended the work of organizations like ACTA for helping trustees and alumni to call for viewpoint diversity and balance on campus. While there is no silver bullet, it is critical that faculty recommit to their role of teaching and mentoring students, and for students to make known to college leaders their desire for unfettered opportunities to engage with research, opinions, and ideas from across the political spectrum. ●

# The Honorable José A. Cabranes Receives 2019 Merrill Award

This year, the Honorable José A. Cabranes, United States Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, took the stage as the winner of ACTA's Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. The award gala was attended by nearly 180 guests, including family members and clerks of Judge Cabranes, ACTA supporters, and many college students.

ACTA President Michael Poliakoff welcomed the guests, describing ACTA's work to promote free speech on campus, lift the veil shrouding ever-rising college costs, and empower donors

to support colleges with sound academic programs. Edwin Williamson, chairman of ACTA's Board of Directors, honored the unblinking courage of Judge Cabranes and extended heartfelt thanks to the college students in attendance, this year's Gala sponsors, the Merrill Award selection committee, and ACTA's Council of Scholars, former Board Chair Robert Lewit, and staff.

Nancy Merrill Sullivan, daughter of the late Philip Merrill—founding member of ACTA's National Council and stalwart defender of free speech and the liberal arts—presented Judge

*(continued on 8)*

## Presentation of Philip Merrill Award



The Honorable Michael B. Mukasey



Benno C. Schmidt, Jr.



Donald Kagan



Merrill Award Winner The Honorable José A. Cabranes



Michael Mukasey, Benno Schmidt, Michael Poliakoff, José Cabranes, Donald Kagan, Nancy Merrill Sullivan



The Honorable Ralph K. Winter, Jr. (by video)

## Merrill Award Presentation (cont'd)

Cabranes with a specially designed fire bucket inscribed with the scales of justice and the First Amendment on an ancient Greek column to celebrate his championship of the principles of liberty as a distinguished federal judge, General Counsel of Yale University, and trustee at Yale, Columbia, and Colgate universities. Judge Cabranes was honored with profound tributes from Benno Schmidt, former president of Yale University; Ralph K. Winter, United States Circuit Judge; Donald Kagan, Sterling Professor Emeritus of Classics & History at Yale; and former U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey. The tribute gives lauded Judge Cabranes's work to safeguard academic freedom and his conviction that liberty must be defended by all branches of government for democracy to thrive.

In his acceptance speech, Judge Cabranes thanked ACTA for working to make higher education truly liberal and truly represent Western values. He noted that dangerous developments on campus—narrow ideological study,

the erosion of due process, a pedagogy of denigrating America, trigger warnings, and restrictive speech codes—are all symptoms of a single malady: a deep confusion over the university's purpose. This intellectual confusion is driven by



The 15<sup>th</sup> Merrill Award winner, Judge José Cabranes, is congratulated by the 9<sup>th</sup> Merrill Award winner, Professor Donald Kagan.

a burgeoning bureaucracy and students who favor activism over education, supplanting faculty with whom the true power of the university should lie. These two groups mutually reinforce

each other: With students demanding an increase in rules and supervision, college administrators rise to the call, assuring a new pipeline of activist students through ideological-driven orientation programs and the conflation of inquiry and action that results in the dangerous idea that speech is violence.

The alliance between activist students and non-academic bureaucrats has eroded the mission of higher education, which is the pursuit and preservation of knowledge, to a new focus on globalism, equity, and diversity. To once again make clear the dividing line between inquiry and activism within higher education, Judge Cabranes remarked, non-faculty bureaucrats must be dislodged. By joining with trustees, alumni, and donors, faculty can recover

their voices, restore the focus of the liberal arts on intellectual virtue, and set a clear expectation for a challenging college education that upholds free expression without ideological constraint. ●

## FAR Conference Brings Together Innovative Faculty

In late September, distinguished faculty from across the country gathered together in Orem, Utah, at Utah Valley University (UVU) for the fall 2019 Oases of Excellence conference. The 68 programs designated as Oases of Excellence by ACTA introduce students to the best of the foundational arts and sciences, protect free inquiry into a range of intellectual viewpoints, and prepare students for informed citizenship.

In the morning session, “Engaging Students: Liberal Arts and Learning,” panelists discussed the critical need for liberal arts training at our nation’s colleges and universities as well as ways that faculty can help build a student community. David Corey, professor of political science at Baylor University, gave the keynote address, “Liberal Arts: Its Conditions and Its Ends,” and led an interactive discussion with conference participants on the core tenets of the liberal arts. In the afternoon, ACTA staff and Scott Paul, executive program director of UVU’s Center for Constitutional Studies, shared methods for finding donors to support Oases programs and improving social media presence. In the final panel, “Scaling Up: Case Studies of Campus Efforts,” Oases directors offered strategies for success from their experiences creating and leading rigorous liberal arts programs on campus.

*(continued on 11)*



# ACTA Adds Three New Programs to Its Oases of Excellence Network

ACTA has added three new programs to our Oases of Excellence network. Since the Oases project began in 2014, we have profiled rigorous programs at colleges and universities across the country that are filling in the gaps created by schools' weak core curricular requirements. Oases teach students about free markets, Great Books, the American heritage, and our Founding principles, and ensure free inquiry into a range of viewpoints.

Established in 2011, the **Center for Constitutional Studies** (CSC) at Utah Valley University promotes the instruction, study, and research of constitutionalism. The Center collaborates with the university on a minor in Constitutional Studies and provides mentoring and assistantships that give students the experience they need for graduate school and the workforce. CSC holds a Constitution Week Conference, lectures on the Founding Fathers, and debates on current issues.

The **Engineering Leadership Program** (ENLP) at the

University of Colorado–Boulder weaves together engineering with the humanities to encourage “reflection on questions that arise within the purview of science, but which science alone cannot answer.” The ENLP’s Engineering Leadership Certificate signifies competency in a robust curriculum that uses texts in history, the philosophy of science, moral philosophy, political science, and anthropology.

The **Adams Center for Entrepreneurship** at Florida Atlantic University educates students for productive careers and citizenship by focusing on cross-disciplinary academics, community outreach, and venture creation in emerging technologies. The Center seeks to foster creativity, curiosity, and deep thinking for students across all disciplines who are interested in pursuing entrepreneurship.

These programs are a key element in ACTA’s efforts to reverse academic erosion, promote civic literacy, and encourage healthy debate on campus. We are grateful for all they do to educate America’s college students. ●

## Political Philosopher David Corey Discusses Intellectual Humility

David Corey, professor of political science at Baylor University, recently joined our podcast, Higher Ed Now, for a fascinating discussion with ACTA President Michael Poliakoff on classical education, intellectual humility, and rational discourse.

**DC (David Corey):** There are several virtues that are prerequisites to intellectual humility. We don’t have many examples of this on TV, in our news, or in our social media, so it is a very foreign concept for students who are learning to take it up. They find it refreshing when I say, ‘I am wrong all the time. Now, I am sure you are going to show me when I am wrong. Watch how I take it. It does not bother me. I feel thankful to be shown that I am wrong. I would just hope that you would also be as willing to engage.’



President Michael Poliakoff, David Corey, and ACTA’s Erik Gross discuss the Western tradition of dialogue for ACTA’s podcast Higher Ed Now.

**MP (Michael Poliakoff):** The process of coming to an understanding of each other, even though we may disagree, goes all the way back to Socrates with his wonderful intellectual humility. Habituating people very early on to that common search for truth, which presupposes, of course, that there is something called

truth and that we are obligated to search for it, even if we don’t find it: those are the things that will carry us forward as people, as a nation, as individuals.

**DC:** An education in classic texts can show us areas of common ground where we as human beings have certain commonalities, no matter our race,

*(continued on 10)*



# H E A R D C A M P U S ON

## eSports Degrees Could be Colleges' New Cash Cow

Colleges are cashing in on the \$1 billion professional eSports market. The University of California–Irvine is giving out scholarships to top video game players to tempt them to enroll, mirroring the admissions process for premier athletes. While many schools have participated in varsity eSports competitions for years, some institutions are now offering courses and degrees in competitive multiplayer video gaming. Becker College, for example, launched a Bachelor of Science in eSports management in October. Shenandoah University and The Ohio State University have followed suit, with the latter offering an eSports and game studies undergraduate major.

Business leaders increasingly express dissatisfaction in graduates' workforce readiness because they lack the skills most valued by employers. These include the capacity for critical thinking and quantitative reasoning, verbal and written communication skills, and other highly-valued soft skills like self-discipline, punctuality,

and perseverance. While video gaming degrees will not help students out much in these areas, the traditional arts and sciences disciplines, properly taught, cultivate each one of these abilities. Literature and composition courses build strong writing and communication skills; and economics, mathematics, and science courses prepare students to be analytical thinkers. Visit [WhatWillTheyLearn.com](http://WhatWillTheyLearn.com) to find schools with core curricula that equip students with these skills and prepare them for the ever-evolving job market.

## Two Brave Professors Closing Political Divide

Amidst regular reports of restrictive speech policies on campus, disinvitations of guest speakers, and censorship of content that might cause offense in the classroom, Professor John Shields of Claremont McKenna College and Professor Phil Zuckerman of Pitzer College are encouraging students to engage with opposing viewpoints. The two professors, one a conservative and the other a liberal, came together to

co-teach a course titled “The University Blacklist” which prods students to examine their own biases and better understand the viewpoints of others.

According to an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Professor Shields was inspired to form a course that specifically features the work of academics and thought leaders who have been “blacklisted” or disinvited from campus after Heather Mac Donald was shouted down by students at Claremont McKenna in 2017. The professors recruit students from across the political spectrum, and in the first two weeks of class, they debate each other in order to help their students feel comfortable sharing their own views and civilly debating one another.

The class was met with enthusiasm from students who say it allowed them to determine for themselves the merit of individual arguments based on rhetorical and factual analysis, and to encounter views they would not have otherwise. The course, first offered in 2018 with a long waitlist, is being taught again this fall. ●

## David Corey, *continued from 9*

our gender, no matter where we're from. . . . The political philosophy and classics classrooms have to become a sacred place where we give each other permission to ask questions that might not be acceptable to ask outside these boundaries. We give each other permission to be wrong.

**MP:** The other important thing to remember is something that Alan Bloom drew our attention to—that the Western tradition is a tradition of disagreement, dialogue, sometimes eristic, indeed, but that it is not a monolithic set of truths that we're all told to adhere to. Very few traditions have built within them the whole idea of a dialogue. A place where people differ.

**DC:** The Greeks, if they're not the inventors of free speech, they're awfully close. They have a term, *parrhesia*, meaning frankness of speech. As valuable as *parrhesia* is, and it is valuable, it's still a battle of one position against another. . . . We can have our battles over free speech, and I think we should. But we need more than free speech as well. We need a charitable kind of speech that seeks the truth that the other is able to contribute. . . . I keep a running list of techniques that can help nudge my students into those deep conversations in a kind of charitable thinking through of something together—the ability to enter quickly into another person's thoughts to sympathize with what they are feeling, to make it clear that I am not combating you, I am actually looking for the best arguments for your side as well. ●

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## Former ACTA Board Member Receives Medal of Freedom

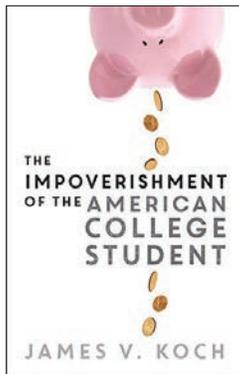
On October 9, the Honorable Edwin Meese III, long-serving former member of ACTA's Board of Directors, received the presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. As a dedicated public servant, he has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to defending constitutionalism, the rule of law, and proper limits on government power.

In 1984, Mr. Meese was appointed 75<sup>th</sup> U.S. Attorney General by President Ronald Reagan. Prior to his appointment, he served as chief policy advisor to President Reagan, coordinating many of his most significant programs, including judicial selection and the Strategic Defense Initiative. Upon accepting the award from President Donald Trump at a White House ceremony, Mr. Meese remarked, "Ronald Reagan was a pivotal part of my life, and I am always grateful to him."

Mr. Meese currently serves as The Heritage Foundation's Ronald Reagan Distinguished Fellow Emeritus at the Meese Center for Legal and Judicial Studies and is on the Board of Directors of the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. ACTA President Michael Poliakoff noted: "Attorney General Meese brought to our Board of Directors broad wisdom, practical understanding of university dynamics, and unflagging resolve to ensure that American higher education always lives up to its obligation to prepare graduates for engaged and informed citizenship." ●



### FROM the BOOKSHELF



#### ***The Impoverishment of the American College Student: A Scathing Indictment of the College Affordability Crisis***

By: Erik Gross

In *The Impoverishment of the American College Student*, Board of Visitors' Professor of Economics Emeritus and President Emeritus of

Old Dominion University, James V. Koch, pulls no punches in his detailed, panoramic account of how our colleges and universities have become unaffordable for ordinary Americans. Published by the Brookings Institution, the book is evidence-based and ideologically neutral in its account of the drivers of college costs and the long-run impact of rising tuition rates. With a wealth of data, charts, and figures, Dr. Koch explains how governmental funding mechanisms, as well as mismanagement by college leadership and shifting labor market demands, have created a perfect storm that is draining households financially and limiting social mobility. Dr. Koch believes that tackling college affordability will ultimately rely on leadership at the board level to vote against tuition increases.

This is a serious book. It is not meant for casual reading. If one wishes to gain a deep and nuanced understanding of the higher education marketplace, however, it is an essential volume. After finishing the book, my grandmother asked me to explain why college has gotten so expensive. I responded, "How much time do you have?" ●

#### **FAR Conference**, *continued from 8*

As panelist Shilo Brooks noted, "If it is true that the liberal arts are dying in universities, then the worst thing we can do is sit around and lament. We need innovative and forward-thinking solutions to this problem that do not rely on traditional academic frameworks." Oases of Excellence faculty conferences serve as a place where participants can find inspiration and creative direction for their individual programs.

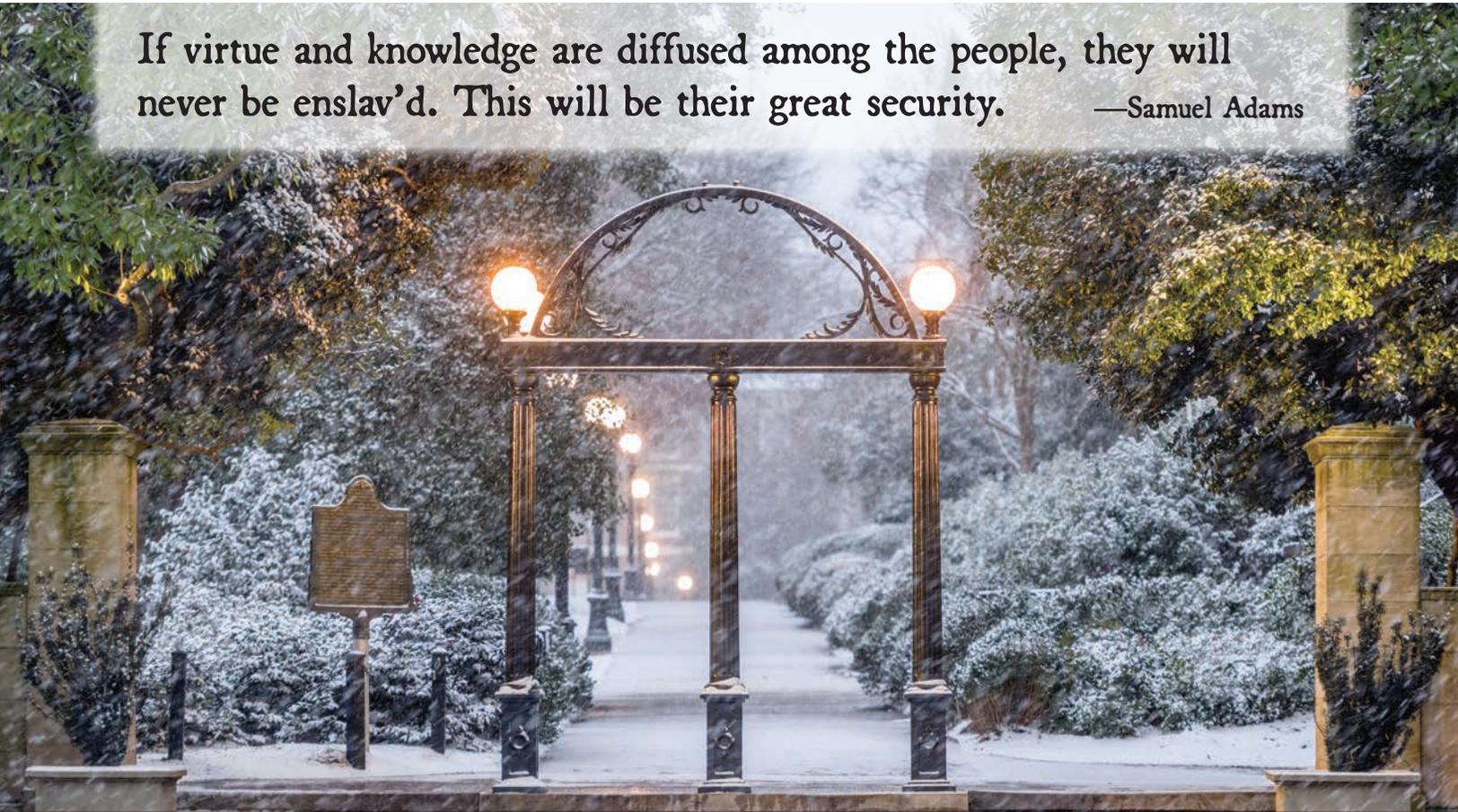
ACTA's Fund for Academic Renewal is privileged to partner with faculty leaders who care deeply about their students' well-being and are committed to providing them with high-quality liberal arts instruction. The dedication and innovation of Oases leaders is an encouraging sign for the future of higher education, and we look forward to our next Oases of Excellence conference in 2020. ●



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If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslav'd. This will be their great security. —Samuel Adams



We at ACTA send our sincerest thanks for your invaluable support in pursuing this grand idea, and we wish you a holiday season filled with joy!