



ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

Board of Directors

Robert T. Lewit, Chairman

Jane Fraser

Edwin Meese III

Carl B. Menges

Michael B. Poliakoff

Terence P. Ross

Sandra Stotsky

Jody Wolfe

Senior Fellow

Anne D. Neal

Council of Scholars

George E. Andrews

Pennsylvania State University

Mark Bauerlein

Emory University

Marc Zvi Brettler

Duke University

William Cook

SUNY-Genesee

Paul Davies

College of William & Mary

David C. Doughy, Jr.

Christopher Newport University

William Fagan

University of Maryland

Judith Farr

Georgetown University

Sidney L. Gulick III

University of Maryland

Robert "KC" Johnson

CUNY-Brooklyn College

Anatoly M. Khazanov

University of Wisconsin

Alan Charles Kors

University of Pennsylvania

Jon D. Levenson

Harvard Divinity School

Molly Levine

Howard University

George R. Lucas, Jr.

U.S. Naval Academy

Joyce Lee Malcolm

George Mason University

Matthew A. Malkan

UCLA

Michael Podgursky

University of Missouri

James A. Sellers

Pennsylvania State University

April 10, 2017

Dear Members of the Middlebury College Board of Trustees:

In light of recent events on your college campus, I am sending you a copy of the University of Chicago's 2015 Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression.

At least 17 major institutions have embraced these best practices in protecting free speech, and with it, academic freedom. In April 2015, Princeton became the first institution to endorse the Chicago Principles delineated in the Committee's report, and the boards of Purdue University and Chapman University followed suit. Johns Hopkins and the University of Wisconsin System have adopted similar policies affirming the value of free speech.

We urge your board to adopt the Chicago Principles (enclosed) and to ensure that course catalogs include a statement upholding the value of the free exchange of ideas. The board should also look toward convocations and commencements as opportunities for university leadership to reiterate and expound these core principles of American higher education.

In tandem, we urge you, going forward, to ensure that Middlebury vigorously enforces existing policies imposing sanctions for disruptions that violate its community values. Middlebury's college handbook defines "disruptions" as including "purposeful blocking the view of others at the event" as well as "noise or action that disrupts the ability of the audience to hear (e.g., shouting out or use of a bull horn)." These rules should apply to all members of the Middlebury community, including faculty.

Universities understandably struggle with enforcement of their rules against disruption and the "heckler's veto." However, sanctions must be imposed appropriately if they are to work as a deterrent to subsequent disruption. Thank you for your service in higher education. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.
President

Enclosure

PROMOTING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EXCELLENCE

1730 M Street NW, Suite 600 Washington, DC 20036

T (202) 467-6787; (888) ALUMNI-8 F (202) 467-6784 info@GoACTA.org www.GoACTA.org