

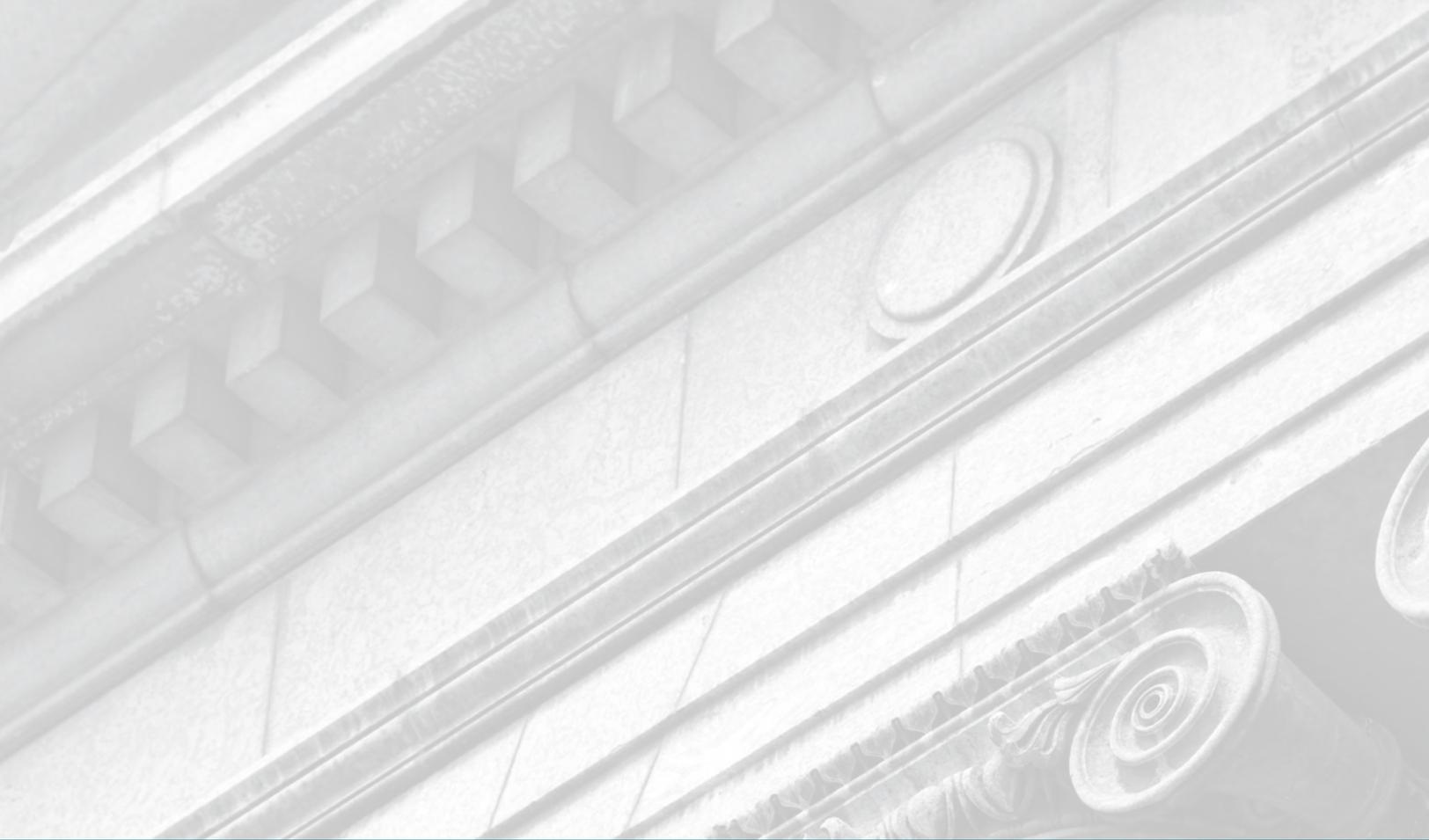
# TEMPERATE RADICALS

Celebrating two decades of hard-charging higher education reform

# 2015



**ACTA**  
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF  
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI



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The **American Council of Trustees and Alumni** is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to academic freedom, excellence, 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 21,000 current board members. Our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, reaches over 13,000 readers.

# From the President

## 20 years!

In 2015, ACTA celebrated 20 years of hard-charging higher education reform. And what a story we have to tell.

Once a lone voice in the wilderness, ACTA is now *leading* the charge in our vigorous campaign to restore academic excellence, academic freedom, and accountability to American higher education. Core curricula, accreditation reform, historical literacy, engaged governance, and intellectual diversity—these issues are now front and center. The reason? ACTA has put them there.

“Core curricula, accreditation reform, historical literacy, engaged governance, and intellectual diversity—these issues are now front and center. The reason? ACTA has put them there.

Across the spectrum, distinguished higher ed leaders are singing our praises. David McCullough, Larry Summers, Ken Starr. And why? Because ACTA has the focus, the courage, and the vision to demand the urgent changes our country needs to remain educated and free.

Read on to see what your support has made possible. The public is paying attention to core requirements. The University of Georgia, Baylor University, Christopher Newport University—these are just a few of the schools receiving ACTA “A” grades whose coherent and thoughtful core curricula ensure graduates have the knowledge and skills

necessary to succeed after graduation. At a time when “anything goes” on most college campuses, these schools are taking a stand for a rigorous and broad education and are finding a competitive niche in the education marketplace. Incentives are changing, and ACTA is making it happen.

Take a look at our high-profile campaign for accreditation reform. Back in 1996, we issued our first call for radical change, on the grounds that accreditation failed to protect students and taxpayers. In the succeeding years, we have kept up that call—writing, speaking, testifying—relentlessly keeping the focus on this flawed system and how it has contributed to the trillion dollars in student debt. Last year, we appeared not once but twice to outline the problems—before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. And the result? ACTA’s proposals for legislative reform are now at the fore, endorsed by no less than the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page.



And have you heard of Judge Judy? It turns out that nearly 10% of college students think she is on the U.S. Supreme Court. That finding—from a constitutional literacy survey we conducted in the fall—went viral, as they say, appearing on television, cable news, and radio stations across the country. This and other high-profile surveys are part and parcel of our aggressive campaign to restore historical literacy and ensure the next generation of leaders knows about our great nation’s past.

There is a crisis in civic education and—like no other organization—ACTA is committed to reversing this troubling trend. Inside, you’ll see that Pulitzer Prize winner Kathleen Parker agrees. Ms. Parker’s syndicated column, in fact, emphasizes what ACTA has discovered. Few colleges today require their graduates to have a basic knowledge of our Constitution or American civics and government, and fewer yet unequivocally protect the robust exchange of ideas from attack for alleged insensitivity.

The rising intolerance we see on campus—in the form of trigger warnings, claims of microaggressions, and disinvitations of speakers—underscores a troubling disregard for the free speech and academic freedom

essential to a liberal education, as well as a failure to understand the meaning of the First Amendment.

Twenty years ago, ACTA saw—and predicted—the impending crisis of quality in higher education. Today, we are at the forefront of reform, campaigning each and every day for a return to academic freedom, academic excellence, and accountability. We at ACTA are pleased to be “temperate radicals”—restoring American higher education to first principles through thoughtful independent research and analysis. Our campaign for higher ed reform has never been more timely or more important.

We thank you for your invaluable support and hope that you will enjoy seeing in the following pages what you have made possible.

With warm regards,

Anne D. Neal  
President

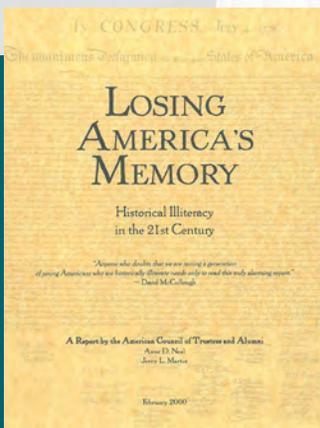
# Academic Excellence



In 2000, ACTA's leaders, Jerry Martin and Anne Neal, hold a press conference on Capitol Hill announcing ACTA's report, *Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

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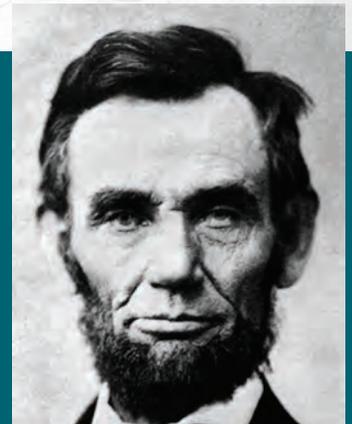
MILESTONES



In 2000, ACTA releases its seminal report documenting historical illiteracy.



In 2005, ACTA establishes the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education.



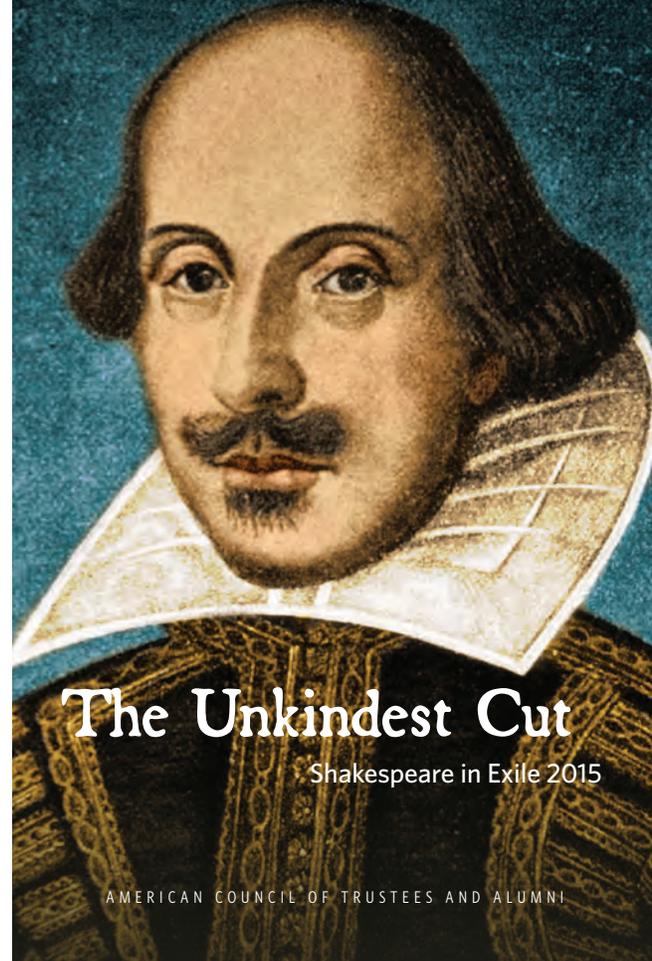
ACTA regularly gauges historical knowledge among college students through surveys on subjects from Lincoln to D-Day.

As ACTA sees it, students deserve a liberal education that enables them to live thoughtful lives informed by the study of the highest achievements of human civilization. So for the last 20 years, we have worked long and hard to focus our colleges and universities on a coherent and rigorous curriculum that will prepare students for successful entry into the workforce, informed citizenship, and lifelong learning.

Until the 1960s, colleges typically required students to take surveys of Western Civilization and to be familiar with writers such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton. Since then, department turf battles, ideological attacks on Western Civilization, and the disdain for the idea of Great Books have resulted in a vast, chaotic menu of course options, many of them trivial and frivolous. ACTA is working hard to change all that.

## Bringing Shakespeare Out of Exile

We have long focused on Shakespeare—and the Bard’s place in the curriculum. In 2015, we did again, wanting to know exactly how many English departments among our nation’s top colleges and universities have any requirements for Shakespeare.



### Top 25 National Universities:

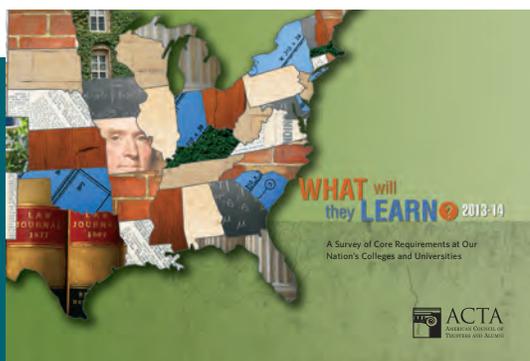
Two require Shakespeare

### Top 25 Liberal Arts Colleges:

Two require Shakespeare

### Ivy League:

One requires Shakespeare



In 2009, ACTA launches *What Will They Learn?*™, the nation’s report card on integrity in core curricula.

What will college look like in 2025? *TIME* magazine’s cover story in 2013 turns to ACTA for the answer.

2015

## TEMPERATE RADICALS

Celebrating two decades of hard-charging higher education reform.

By MARK KENNEDY | April 23, 2015

**Report finds few colleges have a Shakespeare requirement**

NEW YORK (AP) — As Shakespeare would say, “We have seen better days.” The American Council of Trustees and Alumni has found that less than 8 percent of the nation’s top universities require English majors to take a course focused on Shakespeare.

The study, “The Unkindest Cut: Shakespeare in Exile 2015,” found that only four of the nation’s 52 highest-ranked universities and colleges by U.S. News & World Report have a Shakespeare requirement.

Michael Poliakoff, vice president of policy for the Washington, D.C.-based council and lead author of the study, called the findings “a terrible tragedy.” “It is with sadness that we view this phenomenon,” he said by phone. “It really does make us grieve for the loss to a whole generation of young people who would look to a college or university for guidance about what is great and what is of the highest priority.”

The report was released Thursday on what is believed to be Shakespeare’s birthday in 1564. It comes a day after the new musical “Something Rotten!” opened on Broadway that mocks The Bard as a ramp-shaking word thief.

The schools that still ask English majors to study the Bard are Harvard University, the University of California-Berkeley, Wellesley College and the U.S. Naval Academy.

The report notes that English majors are often future English teachers and many will graduate without studying in depth the language’s greatest writer.

“The Bard, who is the birthright of the English speaking world, has no seat of honor,” the report says. “A degree in English without serious study of Shakespeare is like a major in Greek

literature without the serious study of Homer.”

But William Gleason, the chair of the Department of English at Princeton University, said it’s impossible for students in his department to ignore The Bard. Learning about Shakespeare is a requirement in an introductory course that all English majors take and all theater majors must take a Shakespeare class to graduate. Plus, any examination of social issues inevitably leads back to Shakespeare. “He was usually there first,” he said.

“He is such a vital presence in everything we teach, even if he’s not the sole focus of a course,” said Gleason, who specializes in American literature and culture. “Shakespeare exerts such an influence that it would be a mistake to think we could ever dismiss him.”

The report argues that many colleges are downplaying the classics in favor of survey courses that introduce various styles of thought, such as Duke University’s “Creatures, Aliens and Cyborgs.”

“Rather than studying major literary works in depth, students are taught the rationale for and applications of critical approaches that are heavily influenced by theories of race, class, gender, and sexuality,” it said.



This image released by Boneau/Bryan Brown shows Brian D’Arcy James, left, and Christian Borle during a performance of “Something Rotten,” in New York.

The report urges trustees, alumni, donors and administrators to stop “a vicious circle of cultural illiteracy” by reviewing curriculums and re-evaluating what students need to learn.

“There is more common sense outside the academy and it’s important for these voices to pull us back to the things that are right in front of us for us to cherish and to grow from,” Poliakoff said.

The council calls itself is “an independent nonprofit committed to academic freedom, excellence and accountability at America’s colleges and universities.”

“Less than 8 percent of the nation’s top universities require English majors to take a course focused on Shakespeare.”

On April 23—William Shakespeare’s birthday—ACTA released a new report, ***The Unkindest Cut: Shakespeare in Exile 2015***, telling the tragic tale of the demise of Shakespeare in English department requirements.

Researching English curricula at *U.S. News & World Report*’s top 25 national universities and top 25 liberal arts colleges, ACTA found that only four—*four*—of these highly ranked schools required a dedicated Shakespeare course for the completion of an English degree. Within hours, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Washington Post*, *Associated Press*, *USA Today*, and *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on the story, sparking local and online debates about the value of Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even across the pond, the *Telegraph* lamented the state of America’s English degrees.

ACTA went head-to-head on California NPR station KQED with Roland Green, president of the Modern Language Association and professor of comparative literature at Stanford, who denied the need for such a requirement. Callers and commenters did not agree, offering strong support for keeping Shakespeare in the literature curriculum.

Some faculty opposed the report, arguing that “the Council doth protest too much” and claiming that there was no need for a designated requirement because other topics like film, TV, and non-Western literature were equally important and that students would study Shakespeare anyway.

Again, ACTA held its ground, knowing that loose standards mean that tomorrow’s English teachers might well teach English without ever having studied Shakespeare. Oh, what fools college English departments can be!

## Testing Historical Literacy

Of course, it's not just about teaching William Shakespeare. Higher education in a free society has an urgent civic purpose. We rightly assume that all citizens, and especially college graduates, should have a basic understanding of the country's history and founding principles. Unfortunately, colleges rarely test students on their historical knowledge.

That is why, for over 15 years, ACTA has been surveying college graduates and students, as well as the general public, on questions of basic U.S. history and government.

As early as 2000, ACTA put historical literacy front and center—releasing the disturbing findings of *Losing America's Memory*. Twenty years later, we're still at it. Surveys in 2014 and 2015 found that one-third of college graduates were unaware that FDR spearheaded the New Deal, nearly half did not know that Teddy Roosevelt played a major role in constructing the Panama Canal, and only half of the American public surveyed could correctly identify the 20-year time frame in which the Civil War took place.

## All Rise for Judge Judy!

But our efforts did not stop there. In conjunction with the celebration of Constitution Day, a day mandated by Congress for education on the U.S. Constitution, we commissioned a survey by GfK to see what college graduates and the general public know about the U.S. Constitution. In a report that made waves across the country, nearly 10% of college graduates thought Judge Judy sits on the Supreme Court, one-third of college graduates couldn't identify the Bill of Rights, and 32% believed that Representative John Boehner served as president of the U.S. Senate.

If this weren't bad enough, 46% of college graduates didn't even know the term lengths of members of Congress.

*The O'Reilly Factor* featured the survey and discussed the importance of studying American history as preparation for



(CBS Photo Archive)

**Ten percent of college graduates believed Judge Judy—was on the Supreme Court. “Interesting to say the least,” Judge Judy posted on Facebook, sharing the results with her gigantic TV audience.**



## A CRISIS IN CIVIC EDUCATION

a report by the  
American Council of Trustees and Alumni

“The way forward is clear. A renewal of civic education can reverse America’s civic deficit and restore widespread awareness of our history and government. It is time for students, parents, colleges and universities, and lawmakers to confront the crisis in civic education.”

informed citizenship. *USA Today* called for a reinvigorated education on the U.S. Constitution. The *Orange County Register* devoted an editorial to our Constitution Day survey. And papers across the country published columns on the report.

How ironic that higher ed leaders—in the very same year—called on Congress to eliminate the Constitution Day educational requirement as undue interference in a university’s autonomy!

### A Crisis Is Upon Us

Equipped with years of troubling surveys, ACTA decided it was time to address the crisis again. Shortly after the new year, ACTA released a crisp and hard-hitting report, ***A Crisis in Civic Education***, which brought into relief the depth of student illiteracy. Judge Judy herself took notice, responding to the news that 10% of college graduates thought she was on the Supreme Court: “Interesting to say the least,” she posted on Facebook, sharing the results of the report with her gigantic TV audience. Our findings went viral in news outlets and on social media. The *New York Post*, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, the *Austin American-Statesman*, *The Hill*, *TIME*, *Forbes*, *CNN Politics*, *The Today Show*, *Outnumbered*, and even *Us Weekly* covered the report with justifiable outrage and concern.

*A Crisis in Civic Education* confirms the sad reality: American college graduates desperately need more, not less, study of our system of government. That’s why ACTA is calling for colleges and universities to demand a foundational course in American history or government. Without the content and context of such classes, service-learning endeavors are hollow and students are left disempowered.

Ideally, changes should come from within the institution. But in their absence, several state legislatures—in Oklahoma, Nevada, Texas, and Georgia—have required colleges to teach courses on the Constitution and on U.S. history, and almost all their public universities receive U.S. government or history credit from *What Will They Learn?*<sup>™</sup>. State requirements like these help to ensure that schools maintain the public trust. In 2015, lawmakers in all 50 states received a packet of legislative recommendations from ACTA, including the institution of history requirements. In response, Tennessee leaders requested more information as they too consider this road to reform.

By taking the simple steps outlined in ACTA's report, higher education can make good on its responsibility to educate students for engaged and informed citizenship.

## Grading Core Curricula

Given the crisis, we should not be surprised that a mere 18% of colleges surveyed by ACTA require a single course in American history or government. This is just one of many findings of ACTA's seventh edition of ***What Will They Learn?***, our award-winning print and online rating of core requirements of 1,108 public universities and private liberal arts colleges across the country.

Schools are evaluated on whether they require seven core subjects: literature, composition, economics, math, intermediate-level foreign language, science, and U.S. government or history. And in 2015, only 24 schools received an "A," meaning they required at least six of the seven basic subjects. Christopher Newport University remained a very bright spot, the only public university with a perfect "A." Joining the "A" list was Houston Baptist University.

Overall, the results show there is still work to be done. Little more than a third of schools require literature (36%), and despite our increasingly interconnected world, less than a fifth require intermediate-level foreign language (13%). An abysmal 3% require an economics course! It's no wonder that four in five



In October 2015, ACTA's Michael Poliakoff joined Senator Paul Tribble, president of Christopher Newport University, to recognize CNU as the nation's first public university to earn a perfect "A" in ACTA's *What Will They Learn?*<sup>™</sup> survey and to celebrate the major grant it received from the Beazley Foundation in honor of its outstanding core curriculum.



ACTA received the 2015 Salvatori Prize for American Citizenship from the Heritage Foundation in recognition of our What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> initiative.

recent college graduates in ACTA's survey believe all graduates should have to take the key core courses outlined in the study.

As What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> makes clear, the disparity between what colleges promise and what they deliver is great. And as the cost of college rises, the ability of parents and students to see which schools deliver—and which don't—takes on growing importance. College graduates who have met requirements in the seven core subjects will inevitably enjoy an advantage over those whose time and money have been wasted on a grab bag of courses and electives that devote more attention to zombies, vampires, and pop singers than to the fundamental skills and knowledge that students need.

## Receiving National Recognition

2015 proved a very special year as ACTA—and our What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> project—received the Salvatori Prize for American Citizenship from the Heritage Foundation. The Salvatori Prize, named for the late entrepreneur and philanthropist Henry Salvatori, is a \$25,000 award given annually to the individual or organization that advances “the principles of the American Founding, embodies the virtues of character and mind that animated the Founders, and exemplifies the spirit of independent and entrepreneurial citizenship in the United States.”

With hundreds looking on, President Anne Neal received the award at a luncheon in Seattle, Washington. Former U.S. Senator Jim DeMint, president of the Heritage Foundation, said, “The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is working tirelessly to ensure that tomorrow's leaders

graduate from college with the skills, knowledge, judgment, and character on which our nation's future so greatly depends." David Azerrad, Heritage's director of the Simon Center for Principles and Politics, agreed: "The crisis of American higher education would be far deeper were it not for ACTA's willingness to challenge low academic standards, wasteful spending, and betrayal of public trust. Wherever excellence and efficiency are under attack, ACTA, tireless and unblinking, is our defense."

## Building Oases of Excellence

When we aren't defending, we are building. 2015 marked exciting new growth in our Oases of Excellence initiative. Launched in 2014, "Oases of Excellence" showcases excellent programs on college campuses across the country that focus on civics, U.S. history and government, economics, and political philosophy. In so many ways, these centers offer an alternative to the regular campus fare, providing students with speakers and perspectives they often won't find elsewhere on campus.

Our website listing has now grown to 55, and we promote them through social media and a regular email newsletter. We continue to advise trustees and alumni donors about opportunities to launch new programs.

**F**or two decades you have kept alive, and fostered, the ideal of general education and core curricula in Western civilization and the related (and equally embattled) concepts of serious and responsible university trusteeship. . . . Our country is in your debt.

**The Honorable José A. Cabranes**  
United States Circuit Judge

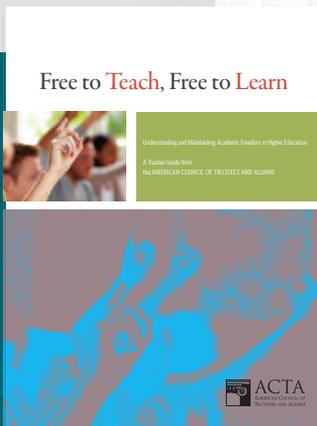
# Academic Freedom



As early as 2003, ACTA President Anne D. Neal and Robert “KC” Johnson, professor of history at Brooklyn College, present expert testimony on the need for intellectual diversity before the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

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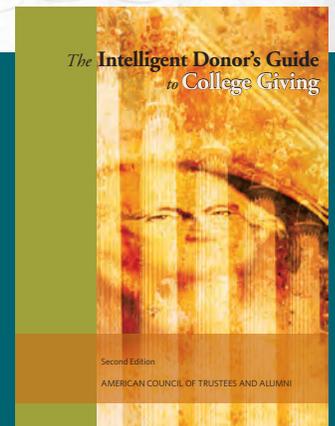
MILESTONES



In 2013, ACTA releases its influential trustee guide on academic freedom at a conference of educational leaders.



ACTA has led the campaign against the disinvitation of controversial campus speakers. In 2014, the *New York Times* publishes ACTA's defense of Ayaan Hirsi Ali at Brandeis.



In 2011, ACTA releases the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of its popular guide promoting intellectual diversity and protecting donor intent.

The mission of higher education is teaching, learning, and the pursuit of truth. And from the beginning, ACTA has worked hard to ensure that students are exposed to different viewpoints and encouraged to think for themselves.

2015 saw a great many threats to academic freedom and intellectual diversity. From California to Missouri, New Jersey to New Hampshire, college campuses were roiled by students garnering media attention as they charged institutions with pervasive racism and demanded mandatory diversity training, “safe spaces,” speech codes, and special counseling services. At the University of Missouri, student activists were even successful in deposing the chancellor and the president.

ACTA found itself on the frontlines.

## Demanding Free Speech

Faced with protests in every direction, ACTA went to the press and to the internet, calling on college and university trustees to join forces in defense of free speech. Acknowledging the continuing challenges of racism in our society, we nevertheless criticized universities for their willingness to “capitulate to strong-arm tactics that undermine the pursuit of truth” and called on them to put an end to the “culture of coercion” that intimidates those with a different point of view.

From ACTA’s call to trustees, urging them to stand up for intellectual diversity and free expression:

“The American college campus has become a place where too many students, faculty, and administrators want freedom from speech, not freedom of speech; where people with controversial views are disinvited or shouted down; and where force—not reason—is viewed as the avenue to change.

The popularity of trigger warnings and proliferation of perceived affronts—microaggressions—are symptoms of a dangerous misunderstanding that college should offer therapy rather than education.

What *is* needed is more speech, more debate—and a firm understanding that the First Amendment does not protect us from feeling offended.



ACTA’s consistent call for the restoration of ROTC at elite college campuses leads to success at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Stanford, and Brown.



In 2014, ACTA’s Anne Neal speaks out against federal rules concerning sexual violence on campus and calls for protecting the due process of students.

————— **2015** —————  
**TEMPERATE RADICALS**  
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(From video by Mark Schierbecker)

“Hey, who wants to help me get this reporter out of here? I need some muscle over here!”

– Communications Professor Melissa Click  
University of Missouri

## Championing the Chicago Principles

Noting that the University of Chicago had served as a model for academic integrity by adopting a Statement on Principles of Free Expression, we wrote to our network of more than 20,000 trustees, calling on them to endorse the Chicago Statement—and to stand up for intellectual diversity and the free exchange of ideas. “Much as the Sullivan Principles raised consciousness to end apartheid,” we argued, “voluntary adoption of the Chicago principles can help revitalize universities as places of vigorous intellectual exchange necessary to social change.”

We are pleased to report that many institutions are responding to this urgent call. Purdue, Princeton, Chapman University, and the University of Wisconsin System have adopted the statement. American University faculty opposed trigger warnings—with our support—and Johns Hopkins has issued a strong statement responding to ACTA input: “Academic freedom necessarily permits the expression of views that even the vast majority of the community may find misguided, ignorant, or offensive.”

## Standing Up to Protests

### Yale University

As various campuses erupted, ACTA found itself front and center. At Yale, speaking at the Buckley Program on “The Future of Free Speech: Threats in Higher Education and Beyond,” ACTA President Anne

Neal called on alumni, students, and other concerned parties to urge the president and the university to stand firm for academic freedom and to uphold the C. Vann Woodward Report, still a governing document posted on the Yale website.

As students called for the removal of an administrator who dared to suggest students make their own decisions about Halloween costumes and not be subject to institutional dictate, ACTA coordinated a letter from Yale alumni to the Yale Corporation. Signed by over 150 alumni from the class of 1955 through the class of 2015, the letter voiced concerns about campus unrest and called on the trustees to abide by the terms of the Woodward Report, which outlines ways to ensure robust discussion and appropriate dissent. "Alumni play a critical role in holding their alma maters to their highest ideals," said ACTA President Anne D. Neal. "Alumni for Yale's Future rightly understand that academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas are essential to any liberal education of quality."

## University of Missouri

As faculty and student protests made front-page news (see above left), ACTA went to the University of Missouri Board of Curators, demanding that they do the right thing. Prominent in the press coverage was the behavior of Professor Melissa Click—a professor of communications, no less—who gained notoriety in November when, during the protest, she attempted to strong-arm a student journalist, saying, "Hey, who wants to help me get this reporter out of here? I need some muscle over here." It was only a few weeks later that news broke that Professor Click would soon be recommended for tenure. Faculty defended the professor, calling her on-camera display "at most a regrettable mistake," and legislators called for her firing. ACTA entered the discussion, citing the university's own policies and urging the trustees to ensure the integrity of tenure decisions by including Click's recent actions in the tenure deliberations: "In the interest of due process and of accountability to the people of Missouri, we call on the Board to insist that Professor Click's recent behavior on campus be given full and rigorous review and be made part of her tenure portfolio." The board secretary

By: ANNE NEAL | December 15, 2015

### What Students Should Have Heard

Recent events on college campuses have prompted college leaders to pledge much to their students. Here is what students needed to hear.

Dear Campus Community:

In recent days, we have heard many voices on and off campus. We have listened to concerns about the campus culture and curriculum. We have heard your demands for greater diversity. And we confess that we have failed you for too long. We have engaged in nothing short of educational malpractice—refusing to stand firm in defense of free speech and refusing to insist on foundational courses that powerfully situate current debates in historical context. We intend, now and forever, to address our failings since the health of our country depends upon it.

Let there be no mistake, our campus is and will continue to be a place of inclusion and diversity, where all students are challenged to perform at the highest level, where individual talents and aspirations are admired and promoted.

Our campus will not shy away from addressing the challenging issues of the day. Racism has been a cancer within American society and the consequences must be addressed. Our institution should rightly be at the forefront of that discussion, offering a place for honest scholarship and rational debate.

Accordingly, we will not capitulate to strong-arm tactics. We will not tolerate—indeed we will discipline—members of this community who engage in the heckler's veto. And we will not allow disinvitations or trigger warnings to insulate our students from reality or encourage witch hunts through illusions of microaggressions. We welcome protest that draws attention to issues; but we will sanction members of our community

who disrupt a class, library, or lab since we also value the freedom of students to study and learn.

Fostering friendship and civility is important, but it can never supplant our central mission: teaching and scholarship. The primary purpose of our institution is to follow truth wherever it may lead and to create an environment where faculty and students may challenge the prevailing orthodoxies, without fear or intimidation. In the next few days, we will release a policy outlining our support of intellectual diversity and the free exchange of ideas and we will ensure that it is distributed widely and discussed vigorously.

In response to your demands, we are committed to transforming and strengthening the curriculum and intellectual diversity. We seek to empower you with the knowledge and skills needed to perform effectively as citizens and in your careers. We pledge to expend whatever it takes to create a strong and coherent core curriculum that will provide a common foundation of learning and a common conversation. We will no longer settle for the "do-it-yourself" grab bag of courses that exists today.

For starters, we will mandate a survey of American history so that your assessment of America and its place in the world will be grounded in an honest introduction to America's strengths and weaknesses—what we have done well and what we need to reform—and to a greater understanding of who we are and what we stand for.

We will couple this course with a concentrated study of the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights, to ensure that all of us understand the

rights and responsibilities they establish. We will mandate survey courses on Western and Eastern Civilizations so that you, students, may be relieved of the crippling presentism and solipsism that inform popular culture. And we will insist that you be empowered by proficiency in foreign languages, knowing that the very best understanding of other cultures comes through their own language and literature. We will ensure that you study math, science, literature, and composition so that you can thoughtfully critique what is in the news and powerfully express yourselves when you are aggrieved, and when you are happy.

At the same time, we apologize for treating college as an expensive country club, replete with sushi bars and climbing walls. We recognize now, too late, that this approach has led to the ever-rising cost of a college education and, unconscionably, has limited access, leaving you, the next generation of leaders, with great debt and little to show for it.

Going forward, we shall be a platform, not for therapy, but for the dedicated pursuit of truth, accepting that hard work and honest evaluation are central to that pursuit.

We are glad to have had this opportunity to respond. Indeed, we thank you for bringing us to our senses.

Sincerely,

Campus Leaders

*The Huffington Post* ran Anne Neal's letter to students, **What Students Should Have Heard**: "We welcome protest that draws attention to issues; we will sanction members of our community who disrupt a class, library, or lab since we also value the freedom of students to study and learn."

# The Washington Post

By: KATHLEEN PARKER | November 24, 2015

## For thin-skinned students, we have nobody to blame but ourselves

It would be easy to call protesting college students crybabies and brats for pitching hissy fits over hurt feelings, but this likely would lead to such torrents of tearful tribulation that the nation's university system would have to shut down for a prolonged period of grief counseling.

Besides, it would be insensitive. Instead, let me be the first to say: It's not the students' fault. These serial tantrums are direct results of our Everybody Gets a Trophy culture and an educational system that, for the most part, no longer teaches a core curriculum, including history, government and the Bill of Rights.

The students simply don't know any better.

This isn't necessarily to excuse them. Everyone has a choice whether to ignore a perceived slight—or to form a posse. But as with any problem, it helps to understand its source. The disease, I fear, was auto-induced with the zealous pampering of the American child that began a few decades ago.

The first sign of the epidemic of sensitivity we're witnessing was when parents and teachers were instructed never to tell Johnny that he's a "bad boy," but that he's "acting" like a bad boy.

Next, Johnny was handed a blue ribbon along with everyone else on the team even though he didn't deserve one. This had the opposite effect of what was intended. Rather than protecting Johnny's fragile self-esteem, the prize undermined Johnny's faith in his own perceptions and judgment. It robbed him of his ability to pick himself up when he fell and to be brave, honest and hardy in the face of adversity.

Self-esteem is earned, not bestowed.

Today's campuses are overrun with little Johnnys, their female counterparts and their adult enablers. How will we ever find enough fainting couches?

Lest anyone feel slighted so soon, this is also not to diminish the pain of racism (or sexism, ageism, blondism or whatever—ism gets one's tear ducts moistened). But nothing reported on campuses the past several weeks rises to the level of the coerced resignations of a university chancellor and president.

The affronts that prompted students to demand the resignations include: a possibly off-campus, drive-by racial epithet apparently aimed at the student body president, another racial epithet, hurled by a drunk white student, a swastika drawn with feces in a dorm restroom.

Someone certainly deserves a spanking—or psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud had plenty to say about people who play with the products of their alimentary canal.

But do such events mean that students have been neglected, as protesters have charged? Or that the school tolerates racism?

Concurrent with these episodes of outrage is the recent surge on campuses of "trigger warnings" in syllabuses to alert students to content that might be upsetting, and "safe spaces" where students can seek refuge when ideas make them uncomfortable. It seems absurd to have to mention that the purpose of higher education is to be challenged, to be exposed to different views and, above all, to be exhilarated by the exercise of free speech—other people's as well as one's own.

The marketplace of ideas is not for sissies, in other words. And it would appear that knowledge, the curse of the enlightened, is not for everyone.

The latter is meant to be an observation, but on many college campuses today, it seems to be an operating principle. A recent survey of 1,100 colleges and universities found that only 18 percent require American history or government, where such foundational premises as the First Amendment might be explained and understood.

The survey, by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, assesses schools according to whether they have at least one required course in composition, foreign language at the intermediate level, American government or history, economics, science, mathematics and literature. Coincidentally, the very institutions where students are dominating what passes for debate also scored among the worst. University of Missouri, D; Yale University, C; Dartmouth College, C; and Princeton University, C—all for requiring only one or a few of the subjects. Amherst College scored an F for requiring none of them.

Such is the world we've created for young people who soon enough will discover that the world doesn't much care about their tender feelings. But before such harsh realities knock them off their ponies, we might hope that they redirect their anger. They have every right to despise the codding culture that ill prepared them for life and an educational system that has failed to teach them what they need to know.

Weep for them—and us.

Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Kathleen Parker decried campus culture. Citing ACTA's findings, she observed that students might better understand the First Amendment if they took American government or history in college—fully in line with ACTA's calls for a core curriculum.

responded rapidly, thanking us for "taking the time to give us good counsel" and forwarding our letter to the chancellor and provost for their consideration.

### Williams College

At Williams, yet another fact pattern arose. This time, it was Suzanne Venker, a feminist critic and *Fox News* contributor, who had been disinvited from speaking on campus—ironically as part of a speaker series called "Uncomfortable Learning." Again, ACTA wrote to the board—and to Williams alumni as well—urging them to adopt policies that would prevent disinvitations in the future. One alum, motivated by ACTA's communiqué, followed up with his own letter to the board chairman, asking that Williams not only adopt a policy on free speech but also host a campus debate between the presidents of Williams and ACTA!

### In Print and "On Air"

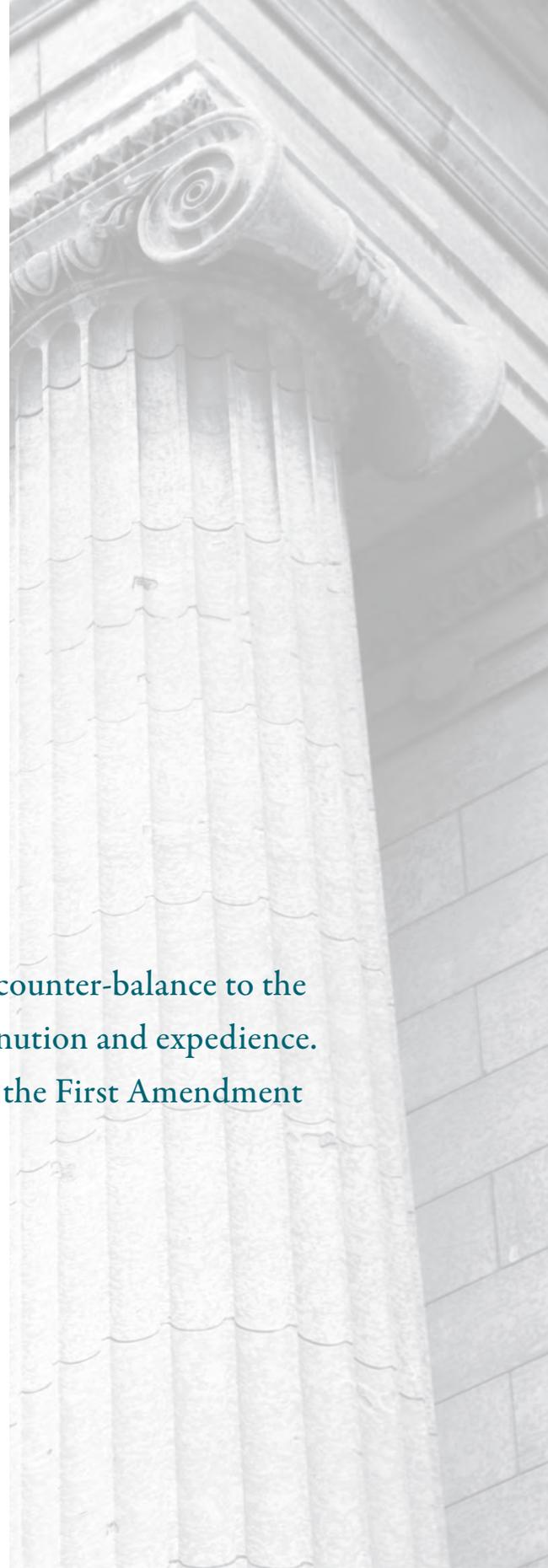
In the midst of the uproar, ACTA found its work prominently featured—in print and on air. The *Wall Street Journal Live*, *Huffington Post*, and *Washington Post* featured ACTA President Anne Neal. And in a later column, Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Kathleen Parker decried campus culture. Citing ACTA's findings, she criticized the many colleges that foster ignorance instead of setting serious academic standards, and she observed that students might better understand the First Amendment if they took American government or history in college—fully in line with ACTA's calls for a core curriculum.

ACTA Vice President of Policy Michael Poliakoff meanwhile hit the airwaves, going on *The Diane Rehm Show*—with 2.2 million listeners—along with a distinguished panel of professors, including Craig Steven Wilder of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Jody L. Allen of the College of William & Mary, and president and CEO of the National Constitution Center Jeffrey Rosen, to discuss the potential impact of campus protests on *Fisher v. University of Texas*, a case now before the U.S. Supreme Court. Poliakoff called on higher education to protect free and vigorous dialogue, invoking Oliver Wendell Holmes’s admonition to respect freedom for even the thought we hate, and he decried the new fashion of looking for microaggressions in an effort to shut down free speech. Poliakoff also warned that the rush to eradicate the campus memorials of historical figures like Thomas Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson, and Elihu Root is a slippery slope that could eliminate almost any historical figure.

“ACTA [has] brought extraordinarily important counter-balance to the culture of political correctness and academic diminution and expedience. . . . Your vigorous and ever more urgent defense of the First Amendment on our campuses has been indispensable.

**Tom Walker**

CEO, American Village Citizenship Trust



# Accountability



ACTA has been at the forefront of accreditation reform for two decades. Pictured in the center is ACTA's founding President Jerry L. Martin testifying before the Senate education committee in 2004. He famously remarked at the hearing, "If meat inspections were as loose as college accreditation, most of us would have mad cow disease."



In 2014, ACTA sets the governance agenda for the future, promoting this project on informed trusteeship.



Former Pennsylvania auditor general, Jack Wagner, responds to the 2012 crisis at Penn State, lauding ACTA's efforts to demand trustee accountability.



ACTA extends its 20-year accreditation reform campaign to the U.S. Supreme Court in a brief challenging the accreditator monopoly.

Should alumni and trustees remain silent when academic freedom is under threat, when educational standards decline, or when political decisions drive academic decisions? When ACTA got its start, the traditional wisdom was surely yes.

But ACTA knew otherwise. And for 20 years, we have pursued a radical new perspective on higher education governance—one that demands engaged and informed trustees who are not afraid to ask the tough questions and insist upon results.

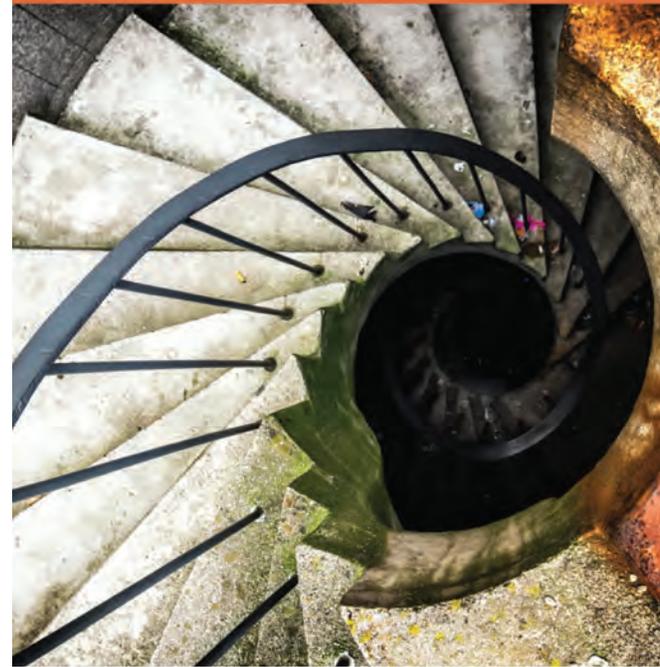
## Providing Guidance in Governance

New realities require new strategies. In 2014, ACTA released a major national report, *Governance for a New Era*, calling on trustees to take a “more active role in reviewing and benchmarking the work of faculty and administrators.”

And in 2015, ACTA’s call for engaged trustees reached a high-water mark as more and more trustees around the country turned to ACTA for key metrics of performance and accountability.

## Showing the Way to Best Practices

In 2015, ACTA released two publications designed to guide boards of trustees to best practices. ***The Cost of Chaos in the Curriculum***, by Elizabeth Capaldi Phillips and ACTA Vice



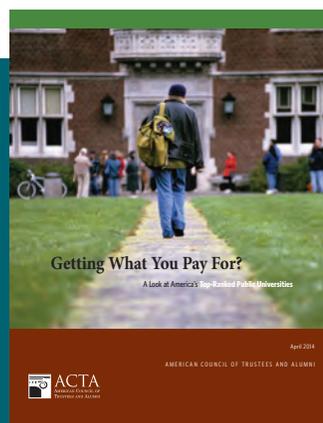
*Perspectives on Higher Education*

American Council of Trustees and Alumni | Institute for Effective Governance

“Chaos in the curriculum can have dire consequences for an institution’s long-term fiscal future.”



Aspen Institute seminar director, Dr. Todd Breyfogle, and ACTA’s Michael Poliakoff provide professional development for trustees through regional trustee seminars.



ACTA’s trustee outreach initiative, informing boards through guides and state reports, prompts significant reforms.

2015

## TEMPERATE RADICALS

Celebrating two decades of hard-charging higher education reform.



At the other end of the country, the **City University of New York System**—the largest U.S. urban higher education system—adopted a dashboard similar to Florida’s accountability metrics featured in the *Governance for a New Era* report. Benno Schmidt also delivered the keynote speech at the trustees’ annual summit in Florida, as well as a speech at the Yale Club of New York on the *Governance for a New Era* project.

One headline said it all: “Once invisible, college boards of trustees are suddenly in the spotlight.” And indeed they were—thanks to ACTA!

## Supporting Effective Trusteeship

Vigilant trustees who question the status quo are often marginalized and pilloried. And that has surely been the case in the **Lone Star State** where one diligent trustee, Wallace Hall, has found himself the subject of impeachment and investigations just for doing his job. In 2015, the saga continued as ACTA provided high-profile support for Hall in his ongoing effort to ensure the integrity of UT’s admissions processes.

Regularly opposed by the administration in his records requests, Hall found support from another source—the state’s attorney general—who issued an opinion supporting a trustee’s right to access school records. This full-throated endorsement of trustees’ fiduciary responsibilities was so good, ACTA sent it to our entire network of more than 20,000 trustees.

At the same time, we went public with our opposition to a bill in the legislature that would have dramatically reduced trustees’ authority and made them subject to “training” by administrators. The bill happily died in committee.

Down South, ACTA again stood firm in defense of trustee engagement, this time in **North Carolina**. In this case, the legislature had instructed the Board of Governors to take a look at more than 200 centers throughout the system—oversight that had not occurred in years. After examining the purpose, cost-effectiveness, and outcomes of programs, the board decided to close down a small number of duplicative programs,

### Higher Education



## Once invisible, college boards of trustees are suddenly in the spotlight

*Some critics say boards don't do enough; others that they meddle too much*

by JON MARCUS

April 30, 2015

Except for the desert sun pouring in through floor-to-ceiling windows, the hearing room evoked a Washington committee chamber, with the same sense of severe formality.

Behind a long table covered by a blue cloth and a neat row of nameplates sat the Nevada System Higher Education Board of Regents.



The University of Texas Board of Regents meets on Feb. 12, 2015. AP Photo/Austin American-Statesman, Ralph Barrera

“Sitting back as passive tourists is no longer a recipe for success in higher education,” said Anne Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, which wants the boards to do more, not less. “If they’re not in charge, who is?” Neal asked.



ACTA’s “Best Practices in Athletic Oversight” video features a rich discussion between former Maryland regent Tom McMillen and University System of Maryland Chancellor William “Brit” Kirwan.

concluding that there were limits to what institutions can and should do. Amid faculty protest, ACTA praised the board for its oversight and called on boards regularly to assess the cost/value proposition of academic and nonacademic programs.

Finally, around the country, ACTA became the go-to resource for media seeking information about presidential searches, administrative compensation, and bidding practices. In **Nebraska**, major newspapers editorialized in favor of transparency and open searches, following the guidance of ACTA Vice President Michael Poliakoff.

### **Customizing our Services**

ACTA reaches out to over 20,000 trustees, and trustees regularly reach out to ACTA for help in meeting their fiduciary responsibilities. Often individual trustees call to get more copies of ACTA publications or to ask for our perspective on an issue at an upcoming board meeting. On other occasions, we’ve been asked to provide customized presentations.

And in 2015, we provided a number of those. We were happy to speak regularly with members of a prominent Midwest public-university board where the trustees and president are working on system-wide assessment and other meaningful projects. ACTA Vice President of Policy Michael Poliakoff and Director of Trustee Programs Armand Alacbay also took part in a private board retreat for a small liberal arts college, seeking to adopt new performance metrics and a composition requirement. In the spring, Neal and Poliakoff provided guidance to the Conference of Board Chairs of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges, leading to a spirited discussion on best practices in higher education governance. Poliakoff

By: Editorial Board | October 4, 2015

Trust Busting Higher Ed

Good news: Politicians are targeting the accreditation cartel.

Feigning outrage that college is too expensive is a bipartisan pastime, so it's refreshing to see a presidential candidate taking the cost-drivers seriously. Senator Marco Rubio is highlighting an obscure network of higher-ed busybodies known as accreditation agencies, and more politicians should study up on how to reform this racket.

"Our higher education system is controlled by what amounts to a cartel of existing colleges and universities, which use their power over the accreditation process to block innovative, low-cost competitors from entering the market," Sen. Rubio said in a speech this summer. Last week he introduced a bill with Sen. Michael Bennet (D., Colo.) that would test a voluntary certification process for vocational and nontraditional education.

Six regional accrediting groups deputized by the Education Department determine whether a college is eligible to receive federal aid dollars, and a coterie of outfits bless specific programs like, say, engineering. The regional agencies appeared in the 19th century to distinguish rigorous institutions from diploma mills, but since the 1960s have morphed into wardens of billions in handouts and subsidized student loans.

These quality-assurance teams evaluate colleges periodically by asking questions such as: How many books does the library house? There's no useful benchmark on what students learn, and by the way, a majority of four-year college graduates don't learn enough to compare viewpoints in newspaper editorials, according to Education Department research.

Nothing but the accreditor's up or down verdict is available to the public, but we know it's harder to flunk than a sex-education course. In 1987 Southeastern University posted a 42%

student-loan default rate, but the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools didn't revoke its accreditation until 2009. The six agencies that approve more than 1,500 four-year colleges have in the past 15 years revoked accreditation for, wait for it, 18.

Then there's grade inflation. Faculty and administrators from neighboring institutions perform the visits. They know the staff at the school they're evaluating might soon check up on them, and so there's a disincentive for intensive review. Add to this self-dealing that colleges pay dues to their accrediting organization—again, the one that decides if an institution qualifies for federal subsidies.

What do students get? Higher tuition, as colleges plow time and money into the process and pass on the costs. Stanford University said it spent \$850,000 in 12 months of a multiyear process, and Duke University reported blowing \$1.5 million over two years. Accreditors recommend changes—trimming faculty course loads, hiring more Ph.D.s—that drive up expenses without improving educational outcomes.

Most pernicious is that the cartel stifles innovation. Students can't use federal aid at colleges that aren't accredited, yet a school usually must serve students for years before winning approval. Accreditation amounts to monopoly enforcement, which is why in 2013 the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools swatted down an online program at Tiffin University.

Entrepreneurs have put the value of regional accreditation at \$10 million, and those that fling the seal are forced to operate like traditional colleges. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges, for instance, requires a

detailed report months in advance for any proposed "substantive change." Not exactly a start-up mentality.

Sen. Rubio's legislation would allow the Education Department to add accreditors for innovations like boot camps where students learn to write code. The outfits (probably industry groups) could only bless programs at or above the 60th percentile in a basket of metrics—such as graduation rates, loan repayment stats, employment figures.

The bill also lays out avenues for nascent offerings, and puts authorizers on the hook for 25% of federal student-loans in default. Students would use Pell grant money for tuition, which means the proposal is geared toward low-income students.

Though an excellent start, the measure wouldn't dismantle the gang of six lordling over traditional colleges, where most students are educated, and the broader priority should be untangling aid and accreditation. Colleges submit detailed financials to the feds and could post independently audited statements online, as the American Council for Trustees and Alumni suggested in 2013, as well as program-specific, annually updated data about completion, default and more.

This isn't extra federal meddling; it's streamlining what already exists. Simple, clear standards would make it easier to revoke funding from schools junking their numbers, and accreditation agencies could return to their origins as voluntary self-improvement groups.

That would foster competition, let consumers decide what's valuable—and cross off one reason why we're all worried that education costs too much.

also presented on governance responsibilities at a meeting of the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees with Frank Brogan, chancellor of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and signatory to *Governance for a New Era*. And last but not least, ACTA leaders met with the Arizona Board of Regents and system presidents for an extended discussion on metrics and best practices, highlighting ACTA's "Three A's": academic freedom, academic excellence, and accountability.

## Launching Higher Ed Now

ACTA also launched an online resource for trustees and policymakers in 2015. In March, we inaugurated our new **Higher Ed Now** series of podcasts and video seminars, available at GoACTA.org and on YouTube. The first podcast examines *Governance for a New Era* with a lively discussion about stewardship held at the National Press Club with lead author Benno Schmidt and three other signatories: Richard DeMillo, director of the Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Universities at Georgia Tech; John Engler, former Michigan governor and president of the Business Roundtable; and Tom McMillen, former U.S. congressman and University System of Maryland regent.

In 2015, McMillen was the recipient of the inaugural **Jerry L. Martin Prize for Excellence in College Trusteeship**, created in honor of ACTA's founding president. McMillen, who also won the *Washington Business Journal* Trustee of the Year award in 2015, has consistently advocated a trustee's obligation to produce value for students, families, and taxpayers. When administrators and an athletic conference pressured his board to approve, without substantive deliberation, a multimillion-dollar agreement with significant impact on university and state resources, McMillen was the sole regent to vote in opposition.

An Olympic and professional basketball star, McMillen is also the star of ACTA's first video seminar for trustees: **"Best Practices in Athletic Oversight."** A longtime ally of ACTA, he spearheaded the unanimous adoption of a first-in-the-nation policy tying coaches' and athletic directors' compensation to the academic performance of their student-athletes. These efforts were covered widely by the local and national press.

Colleges . . . could post independently audited statements online, as the American Council for Trustees and Alumni suggested in 2013. . . . This isn't extra federal meddling; it's streamlining what already exists.



Anne Neal testified before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee at its June 17 hearing, “Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Evaluating Accreditation’s Role in Ensuring Quality.”

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan introduced the video, calling ACTA’s work “absolutely vital to raising awareness on an issue that still doesn’t get the attention it needs and deserves.”

Third in the series is a three-part video: **“Whom Does the College Trustee Serve?”** In it, Colorado regent Stephen Ludwig, now on his second six-year term, examines trustees’ responsibilities, rejecting the notion that trustees are mere boosters and reminding trustees that their foremost duty is to the public at large.

## Leading Accreditation Reform

ACTA used to be the only one talking about accreditation reform. But no more. Now, accreditation has become a household word—appearing in President Obama’s State of the Union address, in the speeches of presidential candidates and sitting legislators, and prominently in the press.

In 2015, ACTA saw its reform ideas start to take hold. ACTA’s Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Clara Lovett, as well as ACTA representatives and policy staff from Congress and the Department of Education, came together at conferences and stakeholder meetings to develop proposals for accreditation reform. At the Center for American Progress, American Enterprise Institute, and Council for Higher Education Accreditation, ACTA’s alternative proposal for accreditation was the topic of the day, just as it was at the National Governors Association, Republican Governors Association, and Democratic Governors Association, where the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act looms large.

What had once seemed radical—ACTA’s idea to end the accreditors’ gatekeeping role—is now at the center of the conversation as more and more parties, across the spectrum, focus on ways to create institutional choice, diminish student debt, and protect the taxpayer dollar.

## Testimony on the Hill

ACTA’s key role was especially evident as President Anne Neal testified not once but twice in 2015 in high-profile hearings, the first before the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the second before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. In testimony before the Senate, Neal called on Congress to end the regional accrediting monopoly and to delete the “blank check” that accreditors use to intrude in matters of state and institutional governance. The testimony—and lively engagement of Senators Lamar Alexander, Elizabeth Warren, Al Franken, and Sheldon Whitehouse—is on ACTA’s website.

Before the Civil Rights Commission, Neal called for a radical overhaul, arguing that the failed system of accreditation has had the most damaging impact on students with the least resources.

That ACTA was gaining traction became clear in October 2015, when the *Wall Street Journal* called for reform in an editorial entitled, “Trust Busting Higher Ed.” Subtitled “Good News: Politicians are targeting the accreditation cartel,” the op-ed singled out ACTA’s legislative proposals for praise, noting that this “isn’t federal meddling; it’s streamlining what already exists.”

“Our committee members benefitted greatly from your clear recommendations to improve the accreditation process and place a greater focus on education quality and accountability. We look forward to continuing discussions about the best ways to ensure quality in higher education.”

**Senator Patty Murray**, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

# *Spreading the Word*



Longtime ACTA supporter Curtin Winsor converses with “George Washington” at one of our earliest ATHENA Roundtable gatherings at Mount Vernon. For our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, General Washington wasn’t the only one who paid us a visit!

———— **2015** ————

## **TEMPERATE RADICALS**

Celebrating two decades of hard-charging higher education reform.

The depth and range of ACTA's media coverage continue to grow. In our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we appeared coast to coast in newspapers, on television, and on radio broadcasts. We are fully in the digital age, harnessing the power of social media and increasing our online presence.

## Making Headlines

In 2015, our print and broadcast circulation totaled nearly 50 million. ACTA's research and advocacy received coverage in all 50 states and the United Kingdom.

Some of our notable appearances were in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Forbes*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Huffington Post*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Orange County Register*, *Politico*, along with many others. The *Wall Street Journal Live*, *CSPAN*, and *The O'Reilly Factor* all featured ACTA's work. ACTA President Anne Neal and Vice President of Policy Michael Poliakoff took to the airwaves on *The Rod Arquette Show*, *Nightside with Dan Rea*, *McIntyre in the Morning*, *EWTN News Nightly*, *The Diane Rehm Show*, and *KQED's The Forum*.

We further expanded our social-media presence to include a brand new Facebook page for our signature What Will They Learn?™ project. It already has over 1,000 followers. Neal and Poliakoff also have their own personal Twitter accounts to profile ACTA's work. ACTA's existing Facebook page created over 8,300 engagements. Another 456,700 impressions came from our Twitter feed. Judge Judy herself shared the findings of our civics report with nearly 1.5 million followers on Facebook.

Our Shakespeare report, *The Unkindest Cut*, and the results of our Constitution Day survey went viral. Tweets and comments sparked debate and outrage at the failings of our system of higher education.



Queen Elizabeth I and George Washington were special guests at ACTA's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday party at F. Scott's in Georgetown, bringing to life ACTA's work to reinvigorate the study of Shakespeare and to honor the Founders' admonition to maintain an informed citizenry.



Jerry Martin, Mitch Daniels, and Anne Neal catch up at ACTA's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration at F. Scott's in Georgetown.

Contributions to online publications such as the *Huffington Post*, the *National Review*, and the *Claremont Review of Books* increased our potential web audience to nearly half a billion people!

## Reaching the Higher Ed Community

**Trustees.** Our network includes trustees from nearly every one of the four-year institutions offering a liberal arts degree in the United States. The network is comprised of roughly 21,000 trustees at nearly 1,300 institutions.

**Alumni.** Our quarterly newsletter *Inside Academe* reaches more than 13,000 alumni, representing a wide range of higher education institutions. And over 4,000 alumni receive our monthly eNewsletters as well as email updates announcing new projects, exciting events, and major accomplishments.

**Governors and State Policymakers.** ACTA regularly reaches out to policymakers, legislators, and governors and their education-policy staff in all 50 states. In late 2015, ACTA crafted five model education bills and sent them to the education-committee heads of every state legislature. We closely examined the provisions of corporate and education law in 22 states. And throughout the year, ACTA advised and engaged with representatives of the National Governors Association, the Democratic Governors Association, and the Republican Governors Association.

## ACTA “On the Road”

Highlights from 2015 include:

**January 27**—Michael Poliakoff calls for more rigorous civic education at the Citizenship Expert Research Meeting, Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in Washington, DC.

**February 3**—Anne Neal and Michael Poliakoff present to the Conference of Board Chairs of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges on the priorities of higher education and how ACTA can be of service to trustees.

**February 26**—Michael Poliakoff testifies before the Alaska State Senate Education Committee on SCR1, a bill seeking improvement in the quality of civic education in Alaska.

**March 10**—Benno Schmidt speaks at the Yale Club on the Governance for a New Era project.

**March 17**—ACTA celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday at F. Scott’s in Georgetown.

**March 25**—Michael Poliakoff testifies before the Alaska State Senate Finance Committee on “Students, Citizens, and our Nation’s Future” regarding SCR1, a bill to improve civic education.

**April 17**—Michael Poliakoff and Chancellor Frank Brogan lead the plenary session discussing CEO and trustee responsibility at the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees.

**May 7**—Anne Neal accepts the 2015 Salvatori Prize in recognition of ACTA’s promotion of civic empowerment at the Heritage Foundation’s annual Resource Bank meeting in Seattle.

**May 29**—Anne Neal testifies before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights during a briefing entitled, “Higher Education: Examining the Civil Rights Impact of Campus-Based Federal Student Aid and College Preparatory Programs.”

**June 2**—Michael Poliakoff participates in a retreat of the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance.

**June 16**—ACTA hosts a salon for our supporters with past president of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick, about the globalization of higher education.

**June 17**—Anne Neal provides testimony to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on the failed higher education accreditation system.

**June 25**—Anne Neal attends the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) conference and participates in the ongoing discussions surrounding accreditation.

**July 16**—ACTA joins a discussion hosted by the American Enterprise Institute on urgent challenges in higher education, entitled, “An Agenda for Higher Education Reform: A Keynote Address by Senator Lamar Alexander.”

**August 27**—ACTA hosts an Open House to welcome friends and supporters to its new office space.

**September 10**—ACTA attends the launch of the National Constitutional Literacy Campaign at the National Press Club. Michael Poliakoff speaks about the gap between the Founders’ emphasis on civic knowledge and the findings of ACTA’s surveys of college students.

**September 11**—Michael Poliakoff attends the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance public hearing and participates in gathering testimony from the invited presenters.

**September 17**—Constitution Day: ACTA releases a survey that shows how little college graduates and the general public know about the Constitution.

**October 16**—Anne Neal speaks at the LEC Public Policy Conference on Competition and Consumer Protection in Higher Education at George Mason University.

ACTA’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala features a discussion by top civic and education leaders, followed by a cocktail reception and special dinner where we present the 2015 Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education to Hank Brown.



Anne Neal, Mitch Daniels, Richard Arum, Tom McMillen and David McCullough discuss the future of higher ed at ACTA's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event.

**November 6**—Anne Neal speaks at the Buckley Program at Yale's fifth annual conference, entitled, "The State of Free Expression and Intellectual Diversity in Higher Education."

**November 18**—Anne Neal, Michael Poliakoff, and Armand Alacbay discuss best practices for cost-effectiveness and academic quality with the Arizona Board of Regents.

**December 16**—Anne Neal attends the NACIQI conference.

## Celebrating 20 Years

2015 was a special year as we marked 20 years of higher education reform. Over the course of the year, we took the opportunity to feature ACTA history and special friends and to highlight particular achievements in our newsletter and on the home page.

The year culminated in our anniversary event at the National Geographic Society. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David McCullough, Purdue University president and former governor of Indiana Mitch Daniels, education policy analyst and coauthor of *Academically Adrift* Richard Arum, and former University of Maryland regent Tom McMillen gathered to discuss the future of higher education, especially the worrisome trends of declining academic standards and rising tuition costs. The panel "Class of 2040: What Will They Learn and At What Cost?" is now available on YouTube and ACTA's website.

The gala dinner that followed was a memorable celebration, with more than 200 of our closest friends and a distinguished Gala Host Committee, chaired by ACTA board chairman Robert Lewit and

“I don’t want another day to go by without thanking you again for the chance to take part in the ACTA gathering. . . . Your cause is worthy, your energy and leadership are outstanding. . . . Rosalee and I wish you all continuing progress in making a difference.

David McCullough

## *20th Anniversary Gala Celebration*

### Cocktail Reception



Ann Cyptar and Paul Davies



Charles Kolb



National Geographic Society Courtyard



Bill Keyes and Philip Booth



Barbara Bruning, Louise Mirrer, and John Bruning



Peter Meyer and Jacquie Pfeffer Merrill



Jake Dell, Stanley Stillman, and Bill Dennis



James Nicholson and M. Peter McPherson



Michael Barone and Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom

# Gala & Presentation of Merrill Award



Diana Davis Spencer and Robert Lewit



Anne Neal



Attendees raise a glass to ACTA. Huzzah!



Nan, Hank, and Lori Brown



David McCullough



John Cooney, Hank Brown, Jerry Rutledge, and Jerry Martin



Wallace Hall



Robert "KC" Johnson



Thomas Rollins



Sandy and Barry Latzer and Steve Balch



Roger and Edna Haskell



Jody Wolfe and Ann Winsor

# About Us



Our building was scheduled for demolition by the end of 2015, so in June we moved into our new offices, ready to take on the next 20 years!

———— **2015** ————

## **TEMPERATE RADICALS**

Celebrating two decades of hard-charging higher education reform.

## Staff

Anne D. Neal, Esq.  
*President*

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.  
*Vice President of Policy*

Lauri Kempson  
*Vice President of Operations*

Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill, Ph.D.  
*Vice President of Development*

Armand B. Alacbay, Esq.  
*Director of Trustee Programs*

Drew Lakin  
*Administrative Director*

Eric Bledsoe  
*Program Officer for Curricular Reform*

Ryan Sabot  
*Program Manager for Development*

Kara Brounstein  
*Program Officer for Trustee Affairs*

Christine Ravold  
*Program Officer for Communications*

Rich Lizardo  
*Research Associate / Editor*

### **Scholar-in-Residence**

Elizabeth D. "Betty" Capaldi Phillips  
*Provost Emerita, University Professor, and  
Professor of Psychology, Arizona State University*

ACTA welcomes the addition of Dr. Capaldi Phillips as ACTA's new scholar-in-residence. Betty Capaldi Phillips is a university



**Dr. Betty Capaldi Phillips is ACTA's newest scholar-in-residence. She has served in leadership positions at a number of universities and has made prominent contributions to the field of psychology. In late 2015, Dr. Capaldi Phillips coauthored *The Cost of Chaos in the Curriculum* with ACTA's Vice President of Policy Michael Poliakoff.**



Our spring and summer interns perform crucial research for the What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> project as well as other key research, outreach, and writing tasks.

professor and a professor of psychology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University, having served as university provost and executive vice president from 2006 to 2013. She has served in leadership positions at a number of universities and has made prominent contributions to the field of psychology. In late 2015, Dr. Capaldi Phillips coauthored *The Cost of Chaos in the Curriculum* with ACTA's Michael Poliakoff.

## Fellows and Interns

ACTA's internship program offers a unique educational experience to talented college students and recent graduates. Our spring and summer interns perform crucial research for the What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> project as well as other key research, outreach, and writing tasks. They also experience the joys of vigorous dialogue through our summer speaker series, which brings eminent scholars to address our interns on important topics in higher education. This year, interns met with former Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Ron Tomalis, Professor Todd Zywicki of George Mason University, Professors Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom of Harvard University, and Greg Lukianoff, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

## Donors and Donor Societies

ACTA maintains its independence because we receive no money from the government; the generous support of our hundreds of donors sustains our ability to keep up the fight for higher education reform.

Altogether, individual and foundation donors contributed a record-breaking \$3.96 million in 2015. In our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we are proud to note that one-tenth of our current donors have supported us for two decades. We are particularly honored by the growth in 2015 of our Legacy Society of donors who have planned bequests to ACTA.

### Meeting Education and Civic Leaders

ACTA donor-society members are invited to exclusive events where they meet important scholars and education-reform leaders in an intimate setting. We appreciate these opportunities to know our donor-society members and hear their concerns about American higher education. Dinners and gatherings are a small way to acknowledge those who have done so much not only for ACTA but also for American higher education.

In April, an enthusiastic group of ACTA friends gathered at Fork Restaurant in downtown Philadelphia. They heard from April Kelly-Woessner, professor of political science at Elizabethtown College, who spoke about her research into the increasing intolerance for diverse views among today's college students. Her remarks reinforced the urgency of ACTA's work to ensure intellectual diversity and exposure to multiple perspectives on campus.

Then in June, an animated group of ACTA supporters gathered at the Washington, DC, home of ACTA President Anne Neal. Over dinner, guests heard from Robert Zoellick, past president of the World Bank, about the globalization of higher education and the urgent need to raise the bar at U.S. colleges.

If you would like to learn more about joining one of ACTA's donor societies, please give us a call!



“It was a pleasure to speak to your hearty band! All of your group . . . are making such a valuable contribution. Thank you for your sense of public service and all the best for the future.”

#### Robert Zoellick

Former Deputy Secretary of State and  
Past President, World Bank

# 2015 Financial Statements

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as of December 31, 2015

### Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$4,666,551
Prepayments and Other Assets	29,688
Property and Equipment (Net)	<u>115,304</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b><u>4,811,543</u></b>

### Liabilities & Net Assets

Accounts Payable	28,199
Deferred Income	25,000
Deferred Rent	<u>151,725</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b><u>204,924</u></b>

Unrestricted Net Assets	3,246,697
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	<u>1,359,922</u>
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b><u>4,606,619</u></b>

<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$4,811,543</b>
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## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES as of December 31, 2015

### Revenue & Support

Contributions and Grants	\$3,964,715
Interest and Dividends	30,118
Program Revenue	13,940
Miscellaneous Income	8,223
Realized/Unrealized Losses	<u>(24,047)</u>
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Support</b>	<b><u>3,992,949</u></b>

### Expenses

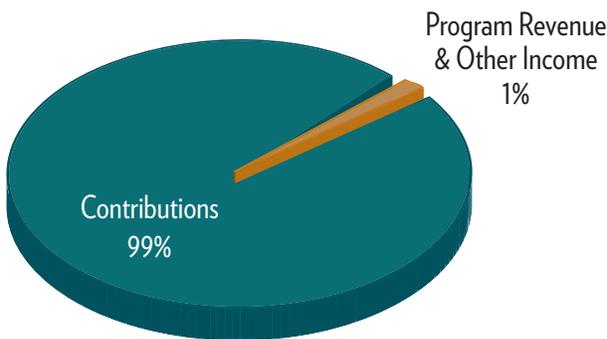
Program Expenses	1,945,929
Fundraising	27,003
Management and General	<u>102,930</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b><u>2,075,862</u></b>

<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>1,917,087</b>
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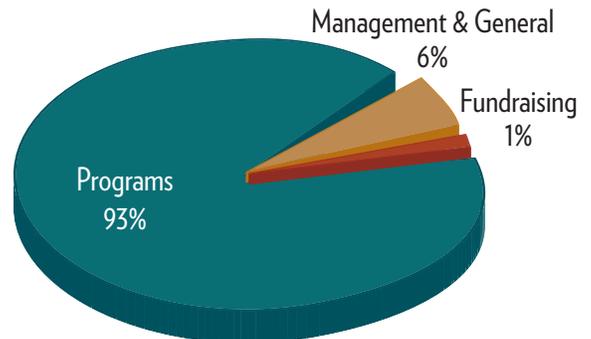
<b>Net Assets, beginning of year</b>	<b><u>2,689,532</u></b>
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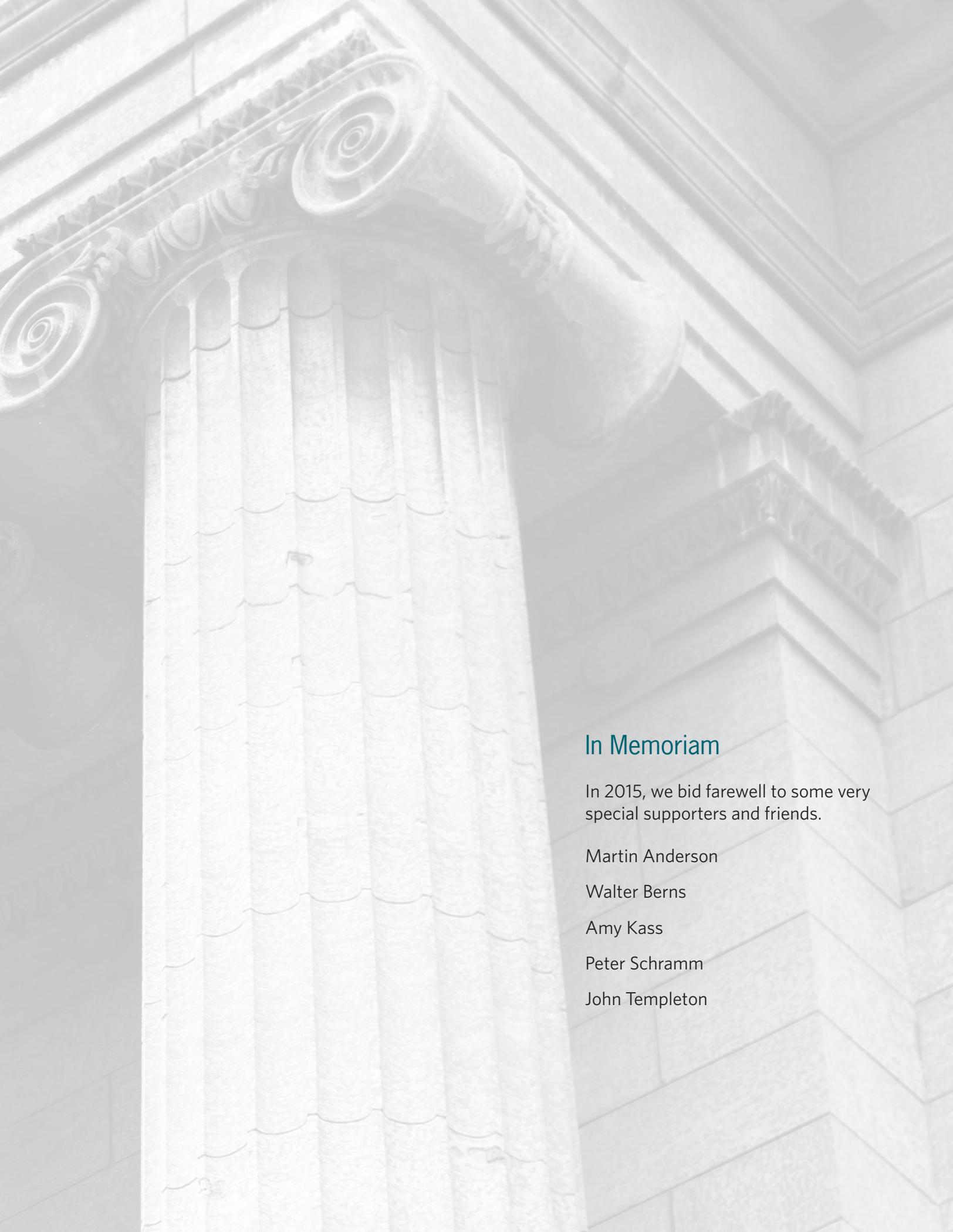
<b>Net Assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$4,606,619</b>
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### 2015 OPERATING REVENUE



### 2015 OPERATING EXPENSES





## In Memoriam

In 2015, we bid farewell to some very special supporters and friends.

Martin Anderson

Walter Berns

Amy Kass

Peter Schramm

John Templeton



**ACTA**  
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF  
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

American Council of Trustees and Alumni

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