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Trustees Do Their Job in the Show-Me State Intellectual Diversity Advances Nationwide

It's time for action. That's what ACTA has been telling the academy for years about the issue of intellectual diversity. And more and more universities are listening.

If you've been reading the papers recently, you understand why we're concerned about this problem. Just look at Columbia University, the latest example. There, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was invited to give a major address—but the Reserve Officers Training Core isn't allowed on campus. Talk about double standards!

We've seen similarly severe challenges in Missouri. Take Missouri State University alumna Emily Brooker. In one of her classes, Emily's grade was docked after she refused to sign a letter to legislators ad-

vocating certain policies she happened to abhor—a clear infringement on her freedom of conscience. Last year, Emily filed a federal civil rights lawsuit, which MSU quickly settled. But that's not the end of this story, because Emily is not alone.

That's what ACTA found when we

commissioned a scientific survey of undergraduates at the two largest public universities in Missouri. Fifty-one percent of the students reported “courses in which students

feel they have to agree with the professor's political or social views in order to get a good grade.”

Students are getting preaching, rather than teaching, in too many of Missouri's college classrooms, and that's not what the taxpayers pay for. Two key groups—the

(continued on 3)



Save the Date! ACTA's 2008 ATHENA Roundtable

www.goacta.org

info@goacta.org

1-888-ALUMNI-8

Mark your calendars now! ACTA's 2008 **ATHENA Roundtable** will be held at the New-York Historical Society, New York City's oldest museum, on **October 16-17, 2008.**



**John R. Wilson, member, ACTA Society of Fellows
Atlanta, GA**

“Theodore was fun to read and will be enjoyed by my grandchildren this summer. Thank you!

P.S. The author neglected to mention that Theodore Roosevelt was a DKE!”

EDITOR’S NOTE: Members of the Decade Society and the Society of Fellows, ACTA’s two most distinguished donor societies, periodically receive copies of notable books inscribed by their authors. One of this year’s offerings was former Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating’s Theodore, a children’s book on President Theodore Roosevelt. If you’re interested in the Decade Society or Society of Fellows, please call ACTA program director Charles Mitchell at 202-467-6787.

**Ruth Malhotra and Orit Sklar, alumnae
Georgia Institute of Technology**

“Thank you very much for inviting us to participate in the ATH-ENA Roundtable last week. We really enjoyed attending the program, and we found all the sessions and our interaction with attendees to be very relevant and beneficial. ACTA brings together such accomplished academics and professionals who are determined to bring about change in higher education, and we feel extremely honored to be a part of such a group. We are very energized by what we heard and further motivated to continue our involvement in advancing academic freedom and intellectual diversity both within and beyond Georgia Tech.”

**Dr. Vince Marsala, Chancellor
Louisiana State University in Shreveport**

“I read with great interest your recent report titled, ‘Why Accreditation Doesn’t Work and What Policymakers Can Do About It.’ Your report is long overdue and after 40 years in higher education I readily admit that I have experienced frustration with some accrediting bodies and agree with your thesis. Many thanks for your thoughtful and insightful report.”

**Tom O’Laughlin, member, Board of Directors
Academy on Capitalism and Limited Government
University of Illinois**

“You helped in a major way to make this first ACLG conference a big success. ... Thanks from all of us for a splendid show.”

**William M. Banta, Esquire
Englewood, CO**

“You are right on with pursuing your debate [against English department chairs who oppose requiring English majors to take a Shakespeare course]. I was an English major at Northwestern.

... I hope you are successful with Northwestern University. There is no substitute for helping students learn the basics. If the educators resist laying a foundation, this tragedy could become a comedy of errors. Thanks for ACTA’s efforts.”

**Wilma Peebles-Wilkins, Dean Emerita
Boston University**

“I recently read your report on the failures of accreditation and the [Missouri State University] School of Social Work situation. While this situation culminated in a lawsuit, the issues around students being fearful of expressing their opinions in social work classes is quite prevalent and needs to be addressed by CSWE as the new standards are developed. ... I served on the CSWE Commission on Accreditation for 6 years and the issues described above require continued debate and discussion with attempts to improve the current dilemmas in our field.”

**Philip Booth, member, ACTA Society of Fellows
Weems, VA**

“Thank you so much for the invitation to attend the premiere of *Indoctrinate U*. What a solid piece of reporting and documenting what is really going on in our great ‘halls of learning.’ Whatever happened to ‘I disagree with what you say but will defend to the death your right to say it’? It has obviously been turned into ‘I disagree with what you say and will deny you the right to say it.’ So much for ‘liberal’ thinking!”

**Susanna Watling, Assistant to the President
State University of New York Institute of Technology**

“Dr. Ted Max, a member of SUNYIT’s College Council, attended your presentation for the SUNY System ACT members on June 21. He thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and his colleagues, and came back to Utica revved up! And, at our College Council meeting this week, he raved about the presentations and information gleaned.”

**Linda Arey Skladany, former member, Board of Visitors
College of William & Mary
Alexandria, VA**

“I just wanted to thank you for including me in the magnificent ACTA Athena Roundtable event last week. I forgot how wonderful your programs were, and how necessary! It is such a travesty and worse yet a tragedy to see what is happening in our finest colleges and universities. ... Last night Barney and I began watching *Indoctrinate U*. What an eye opener! Even for me, and I must say I thought my eyes couldn’t be opened any further! I don’t think people really understand how pervasive the problem is until they see it put together so well.”

Polls Show Public Concern Over Classroom Politics

In July, Zogby International released the latest in a series of polls showing that the American people share ACTA's concerns over the state of higher ed. This poll revealed that 58 percent of the public believes political bias among professors is a "somewhat serious" or "very serious" problem.

Perhaps most notably, 50.7 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds—those with the most intimate knowledge of what happens in college classrooms—say bias is a problem.

But this isn't the only poll buttressing our contentions. In May, the research group Public Agenda released a report in which 48 percent of respondents saw no relationship between skyrocketing college costs and the quality of education. And last year, an American Association of University Professors poll found 60.2 percent of the public believes higher ed suffers from low educational standards.

As ACTA president Anne Neal told a reporter, "Clearly, studies by ACTA and others—indicating declining academic quality and pervasive politics—have made their way into the public consciousness." Even better, the solutions to this problem are working their way into the agendas of trustees, legislators, and other policymakers. For more, see our cover story. ●

Missouri Trustees, *continued from 1*

Missouri legislature and the University of Missouri Board of Curators—were concerned. ACTA's been working with both.

In the legislature, Rep. Jane Cunningham introduced a measure, House Bill 213, modeled on ACTA's landmark report *Intellectual Diversity: Time for Action*. This common-sense bill was about sunlight: It would have required the public universities to file simple annual reports detailing the actions they'd taken about protecting the free exchange of ideas. At Jane's request, ACTA president Anne Neal and ACTA program director Charles Mitchell both testified before the legislature, along with a coalition of students, parents, trustees, and alumni. And House Bill 213 passed the House of Representatives.

In the face of this legislation, the Board of Curators—the University of Missouri's term for trustees—had a series of meetings on intellectual diversity, and the results are excellent indeed. All campuses of the UM system are now launching websites where students can file complaints regarding viewpoint discrimination. Special ombudsmen have been appointed to handle the complaints. The complaints will be compiled in a database and an annual report. These actions are identical to three recommendations in ACTA's report—and they are a vic-

tory for the students. When it was announced, ACTA lauded the Curators and called these reforms "an excellent first step." And we're at work now in Missouri to make sure the progress continues.

The University of Missouri joins several other key institutions that are addressing this concern. Professors at the public universities in South Dakota—where another bill modeled on our report was introduced—must now notify students on syllabi that their "academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards."

Also, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives (where we have testified) has asked the state's public universities to provide a report

next year on the actions they have taken to guarantee the free exchange of ideas. And the City University of New York adopted a recommendation in our report that schools "seek a commitment to intellectual diversity" when hiring. Their new ad for a dean includes precisely such language.

Of course, as Columbia reminds us, there's a lot of work to be done to protect the marketplace of ideas. But in Missouri and beyond, we are seeing real progress. ●

Fifty-one percent of the students reported "courses in which students feel they have to agree with the professor's political or social views in order to get a good grade."

From ACTA survey of Missouri's two largest public universities

Alexander Hamilton Center Lives

Late last year, Hamilton College scuttled plans for the Alexander Hamilton Center—a new on-campus program that was to study Western civilization and the college’s namesake. This latest misstep came after years of questionable actions on the part of college leaders—including plagiarism by the college’s then-president—and justifiable outrage on the part of alumni.

But there’s good news! Thanks to the dedicated efforts of concerned alumni and faculty, the Alexander Hamilton Institute was launched, appropriately, on Constitution Day. This time, the AHI is totally independent and it’s based at the former Alexander Hamilton Inn, a short distance from the Hamilton campus.

A group including history professor Robert Paquette, economics professor James Bradfield, and 1976 graduate J. Hunter Brown (who runs a concerned alumni group) have been instrumental in the AHI’s launch. It has filed incorporation papers and has a website at www.theahi.org. Paquette and Brown serve on

its Board of Directors, along with ACTA president Anne Neal and ACTA Decade Society member Jane Fraser (a former Hamilton trustee). So does former trustee Carl Menges, who had pledged \$3.6 million for the on-campus center-to-be.

Last fall, after the Hamilton administration approved plans for a Hamilton center, the faculty voted overwhelmingly to condemn the plans. The resolution mentioned its governance, but the student newspaper noted that many objections came because some thought the political views of the center’s founders were “offensive.” Then, on November 27, 2006, a dean sent an e-mail nixing everything.

Of course, it’s the students who are the losers in such cases. And they wasted no time bemoaning the faculty’s actions and the loss of enormous educational opportunities. “Hamilton students have lost a great educational opportunity because people could not compromise,” one editorial said. Another added: “Yet again, many professors, because of their ideological biases,

personal vendettas and politics, have deprived students of this great intellectual opportunity. They have ideological blinders on and cannot see that this center would greatly benefit the students, Hamilton and the larger academic community.”

In the wake of the decision, ACTA launched a national public exposure campaign, which resulted in articles in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *National Review*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Newsday*, newspapers across New York, and several other national magazines. And the faculty and alumni mobilized for “Plan B,” which has now paid off.

“I congratulate the dedicated group that has made the Alexander Hamilton Institute a reality,” Neal said at the launch of the AHI. “They are living proof that alumni will refuse to take ‘no’ for an answer when it comes to ensuring academic excellence and enriching students’ academic experiences. They are an inspiration to like-minded alumni across the country.” ●

From Treating Autism to Reforming the Academy



Margaret Schopler at ACTA’s 2005 ATHENA Roundtable.

Over ACTA’s history, two of our most distinguished supporters have been Eric and Margaret Schopler. Eric and Margaret were members of our Society of Fellows, and Eric was known nationwide for his pioneering work on the treatment of autism. To our great sadness, both Eric and Margaret passed away in the last two years.

But they will continue to be trailblazers in higher-education reform. They have generously designated a significant portion of their estate to ACTA. We will use these funds to establish a Reserve Fund, which will help keep us a “force to be reckoned with” for years to come.

We’re honored to have known the Schoplers—and that they deemed us worthy of this amazing gift. ●



Curricular Reform Advances... Around the World

ACTA works every day to strengthen the curricula of universities around the United States—re-centering them on a common core of knowledge. And while many of our finest institutions are hesitant, America’s global competitors have no such hesitation.

Thanks to our friend Harry Lewis—a professor and former dean at Harvard—Professor Amy Tsui of the University of Hong Kong has been in touch, reading our reports *The Hollow Core* and *Becoming an Educated Person*. Why is that? Here’s what she has to say:

As Harry mentioned, universities in Hong Kong will move from 3 years to 4 years in 2012. I have been given the task of leading the university in this reform. Instead of simply adding on another year to the existing curriculum, I suggested that we should take the [time] to ask fundamental questions about educational aims. Unlike US universities, both professional and non-professional degrees are first degrees in Hong Kong. We have ten Faculties (in the British sense). In the past 18

months, I have tried to persuade all Faculties that a very important mission of the university is to liberate young minds and to enable them to see the interconnectedness of human existence. I proposed that we should make room for a common core which does just that.

A common core lets students “see the interconnectedness of human knowledge.” Well put, Professor Tsui.

Of course, it’s encouraging to see that even universities in Hong Kong are starting to see our point about curricula. But it’s also a warning sign: While too many universities here in the U.S. are asleep at the switch, the rest of the world is—if Hong Kong is any example—starting to take a careful look at what students are learning and how they can be best prepared for success.

With that in mind, we’re redoubling our efforts to get our own colleges to “wake up.” ●



ACTA Goes to the Movies

On September 28, ACTA sponsored—along with our friends at the Moving Picture Institute—the world premiere of *Indoctrinate U* at the Kennedy Center here in Washington. This brand-new, feature-length film—years in the making—is a hard-hitting exposé of what’s really going on at today’s colleges: censorship, speech codes, politics in the classroom, and much more.

Indoctrinate U introduces viewers to student after student and professor after professor who have encountered severe challenges on campus. There is Steve Hinkle, who as a student at Cal Poly was punished for putting up a flier advertising a speech by a black conservative. There is Jay Bergman, a professor at Central Connecticut State, who was compared to Hitler for questioning why a “panel discussion” on reparations for slavery didn’t include even one person who disagreed with the idea. There is the staff of the *Yale Free Press*, which is habitually stolen for offending the politically-correct crowd. There is even Charles Mitchell, a censorship-fighting student at Bucknell University when he was filmed and today ACTA’s program director.

After the stories are told, the film asks an appropriate question: Does this all matter? And to answer it, they bring in ACTA’s own Anne Neal. Neal relays the results of the scientific survey ACTA commissioned of college students nationwide. Forty-nine percent said professors frequently injected political comments into their courses, even if they had nothing to do with the subject, and almost a third said they felt pressure to agree with a professor’s political views to get a good grade.

The full-house crowd at the Kennedy Center loved it. The applause was raucous, and the filmmakers received a standing ovation. As this issue of *Inside Academe* goes to press, screenings are being held in various cities. Keep your eye out for *Indoctrinate U* in your neighborhood. ●

An Invigorating ATHENA Roundtable at Mount Vernon

Most productive, and a high level of enthusiasm. That's how **Jim Rees**, executive director of George Washington's Mount Vernon, described ACTA's 2007 ATHENA Roundtable—and we think he's right.

On October 4 and 5, alumni, trustees, education leaders and other ACTA supporters from across the country journeyed to the nation's capital for this year's ATHENA. And we do mean across the country—University of Hawaii trustee **Jane Tatibouet**, who joined us, lives in Honolulu.

The weekend began with VIP tours of the newly expanded Mount Vernon—first the mansion, and then the brand-new Education Center. In the mansion, ACTA supporters were treated to a tour of the third floor—not normally open. Thereafter, they discovered the Education Center that showcased a replica of Washington's pew, not to mention vibrating seats and smoke to make battle scenes come alive in one of the several movie theaters.

The next morning, ACTA president **Anne Neal** kicked off the meeting by laying out “where we stand,” offering an energizing prediction that we are at “a watershed moment in higher education.” She noted that numerous disparate personalities—from the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education to Stanley Fish, who as chairman of the Duke English department in the late 1980s built one of the most radical faculties of the era—are all noting problems and calling for change.

One unexpected change was the announcement that two education leaders scheduled for ACTA's first panel had fallen ill. These were **William Van Alstyne**, Lee professor at the College of William and Mary School of Law and former national president of the American Association of University Professors, and **Hank Brown**, president of the University of Colorado and former U.S. senator.

While the AAUP was unable to provide a substitute on short notice, there was good news. Thanks to the “deep bench” of brilliant ATHENA attendees, ACTA chairman **Jerry Martin** and Hudson Institute president **Herb London**—both former college

profs—rose to the occasion, leading an excellent discussion on “Academic Freedom in the 21st Century,” and proving that once a college professor, always one. Chastising the AAUP for abandoning its own principles, Martin reminded the audience that academic freedom is truly a means to an end, the end being the



Herb London and Jerry Martin



Steve Sm...



Mark Bauerlein



Hunter Brown, Decade Society member, Joe Fulcher, and James Bradfield

search for truth, not the “ideological weapon” it has too often become on today's politicized campuses. Meanwhile, London underlined the corollary point—that academic freedom entails academic responsibility, as the AAUP's own policies state. Both related numerous tales of academic irresponsibility—including one involving London's own daughter.

Next was a panel on higher education's public purpose moderated by National Association of Scholars president **Steve Balch**. According to our keynoter, *U.S. News* writer **Michael Barone**, "universities, which were once one of the most intellectually open and free parts of our society have now become

against the curricula of today, "designed by professors to serve their interests, their professional interests, and their political interests, and these diverge from student interests and the public interest."

Following lunch at the Mount Vernon Inn, ACTA policy

director **Phyllis Palmiero** convened a panel on the topic "Can Higher Education Reform Itself?" First off was former Lafayette College president and member of the Spellings Commission **Art Rothkopf**, who explained the work of the Commission in encouraging reform. Then **Kevin Carey**, a policy manager at the think tank Education Sector, offered a structural analysis of why the academy fails to focus on teaching undergraduates well. Finally, Dartmouth trustee **Steve Smith** gave a firsthand account of the Dartmouth establishment's resolute resistance to reform. (See page 10 for more on Dartmouth.)

The final panel focused on solutions to the many problems discussed throughout the day. By way of introduction, moderator **Phil Booth**—a member of ACTA's Society of Fellows—personalized the discussion with a look at ways he and his wife Nancy worked with a concerned-alumni group at William & Mary and testified before the Virginia legislature. Hamilton College professor **James Bradfield** then described the birth of the Alexander Hamilton Institute—a new scholarly center focusing on Western civilization—made possible by a strategic partnership with Hamilton College Alumni for Governance Reform. The second panelist, Missouri Rep. **Jane Cunningham**, outlined "sunlight" legislation she introduced and ACTA helped to draft on the subject of intellectual diversity.

And **Michael Grebe**, president of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, brought the meeting to a powerful close with an inspiring overview of ACTA-coordinated *E Pluribus Unum*: The Bradley Commission on National Identity, which seeks to examine whether the shared values, beliefs and symbols that forge a strong and healthy national identity are still working. ●



Smith



Arthur Rothkopf and Kevin Carey



Members Jane Fraser and



Peter Berkowitz, Steve Balch, and Michael Barone

the most intellectually closed-minded and unfree parts." Emory professor **Mark Bauerlein** followed up with an "insider's perspective" on the forces at work on today's faculties—where there is little interest in, or incentive to, educate informed citizens. Finally, **Peter Berkowitz**—a fellow at the Hoover Institution and law professor at George Mason University— inveighed

Philip Merrill Award Presented to Gertrude Himmelfarb

This year's ATHENA concluded with a gala dinner high above the nation's capital, where City University of New York professor emerita Gertrude Himmelfarb received the third annual Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. After enjoying cocktails and a breathtaking view of Washington's many monuments from the Prospect House Penthouse, guests heard a memorable tribute to Professor Himmelfarb by none other than her son, William Kristol, executive editor of *The Weekly Standard*.

Next, Nancy Merrill took to the podium to honor her late father, the namesake of the award. She reminded the audience of Mr. Merrill's love for the teaching of Western civilization—which inspired him to become a charter member of ACTA's National Council—and his work as a distinguished public servant. She and her mother, Eleanor, presented Professor Kristol with an imposing print of Queen Victoria and Prime

Minister Disraeli, which the winner later dubbed "perfect."

That adjective fit the winner as well. In a speech entitled "The Sovereignty of Truth," Professor Himmelfarb built on the remarks of previous Merrill prize winners, Princeton professor Robert P. George and Harvard professor Harvey Mansfield who focused on freedom and greatness as ingredients for excellence. In her talk, Professor Himmelfarb offered a third ingredient: morality. As she put it, "Morality and truth—in the culture we now inhabit, and in the university more particularly, each of these words is problematic, and together they sound intolerably, unredeemably Victorian. So it is perhaps appropriate for me—a neo-Victorian, I have been called (pejoratively, of course)—to bring them together on this occasion." And that she did. A published version of her speech will be available very soon. ●



Nancy Merrill, Bill Kristol, Bea Himmelfarb, Irving Kristol and Anne Neal

Supporters Experience U.S. History Up Close

First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen. That famous phrase about George Washington came to life last month when members of ACTA's donor societies had the rare opportunity to experience George Washington—up close and personal—at ACTA's ATHENA Roundtable. While ACTA typically focuses on making sure college students are exposed to America's extraordinary history—we also believe familiarity with the story is a subject for lifelong learning. And that has been very much on display in the activities organized for members of the **Decade Society and Society of Fellows**—our most distinguished donor groups.

During ATHENA, Society members attended a dinner colloquy on George Washington with Michael and Jana Novak, the authors of *Washington's God*. After dinner at the Mount Vernon Inn and warm introductions by ACTA's own "founding father," our chairman Jerry Martin, the father-and-daughter duo offered poignant insights on the subject of "What Made Washington So Great?" and took Society members' questions.

Earlier this year, Society members took a similarly deep dive into American history, taking part in a special tour of the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian led by its director, Marc Pachter. Dr. Pachter is known for securing for the Gallery the famous "Lansdowne" portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart. After the tour, ACTA National Council member Judith Richards Hope sent her thanks and dubbed it "a great tour with great company." ●



Jana and Michael Novak



THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS

October 5, 2007

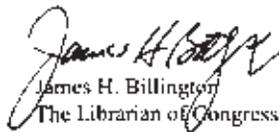
Dear Anne:

To my great regret I will not be able to attend the dinner and presentation of the Merrill Award to Dr. Gertrude Himmelfarb. I am truly sorry, but I have to leave for Moscow earlier than expected tomorrow. I really wanted to pay tribute to this remarkable scholar. She has been a perceptive humanistic commentator on western civilization for as long as I can remember and is herself an exemplar of the best in it.

I hope that you could convey to her and any others that might be interested tonight my admiration for the remarkable record she has had --not only as an author and spokesperson for western civilization in the academy, but also for the generous amount of time and wisdom she has given to many institutions to keep alive deep humanistic studies rooted in the western cultural heritage.

She was a valuable advisor to me when I was running the Wilson Center and to the Scholars Council of our new Kluge Center at the Library of Congress. The late Charles Blitzer enormously valued her counsel when he was running the National Humanities Center and later the Wilson Center. All of these scholarly enterprises benefitted in their early formative period from wisdom she shared as well as the example she set. I am confident that the late Pat Moynihan is rejoicing along with many others past, present (and indeed future) in paying tribute to this great lady. Please extend to her congratulations for being the anchor of a great family and of the broader human family. I am sure Phil Merrill would also be among those singing her praises on this occasion. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni does important work and deserves special credit for honoring Bea.

Sincerely,



James H. Billington
The Librarian of Congress

AAUP Watch: "92 and Ailing"

Many faculty today are preaching, not teaching. That's the complaint ACTA hears from alumni, trustees, policymakers, students, and even many professors. But the insiders in higher education say there is no problem, even though ACTA has scientific proof otherwise.

We also have solutions, laid out in our report *Intellectual Diversity: Time for Action*. And over the past two years, bills based on it have been introduced in half a dozen states. These measures would simply shed sunlight on the

issue—requiring each state's public universities to tell the public what they're doing to make certain their marketplace of ideas is vibrant.

These bills—and the drive for action on the intellectual diversity issue—have been gaining momentum, as our cover story points out. That's why the American Association of University Professors—a major professors' union—recently issued a new statement that specifically responded to ACTA's work. It ridicules the “conventional pieties of small-town America,” whatever those

are, but has precious little to say about the real issue—universities' simple failure to educate.

We're glad the AAUP thinks ACTA's work is worthy of so much attention. But unfortunately, its arguments just don't add up. Maybe that's why in the past year, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has called ACTA “a force to be reckoned with” and “a major player” but dubbed the AAUP “92 and ailing.” We hope they wake up and start dealing with the real issues the academy faces, starting with academic responsibility. ●



H E A R D ON

C A M P U S

Kudos to Colorado

In July, the University of Colorado Board of Regents voted to dismiss tenured professor Ward Churchill, who has been found guilty of research misconduct. In doing so, they accepted the recommendation of CU president Hank Brown, reported in the last issue of *Inside Academe*.

The Regents' decision came after two years of investigation into Churchill's scholarly record. In announcing it, the Regents noted something ACTA has said many times: that "for academic freedom to thrive, it must be accompanied by academic and professional integrity."

Some, of course, believe something different. For example, on the eve of the Board's deliberations, the ACLU claimed that Churchill's firing would be a blow to academic freedom because he has expressed unpopular political views (including comparing the victims of 9/11 to Nazis). ACTA president Anne Neal pointed out in response that five duly-constituted groups of academics examined Churchill's research and found troubling evidence of misconduct. As Neal noted, "There is no bigger threat to academic freedom than those who think it should protect gross scholarly fraud."

ACTA also addressed this argument in May, when we said, "This is not about dissent on campus. Academics have a right to say whatever they want in the public forum. But academic freedom—which governs classroom speech and research—brings with it responsibility. And when professors fail to be responsible, they abuse the sacred trust we place in them, and sanctions are in order." For more on academic responsibility, consult our report *How Many Ward Churchills?*. (You can request a copy using the enclosed envelope.)

The truth is clear: Ward Churchill's loss is academic freedom's gain. And the Board of Regents deserves credit for standing firm and doing the right thing. As President Brown put it in

the *Wall Street Journal*, "Even great universities have problems. ... But a university's reputation will only be strengthened when it works to ensure that it remains accountable to those it serves."

A Sad Day for Dartmouth

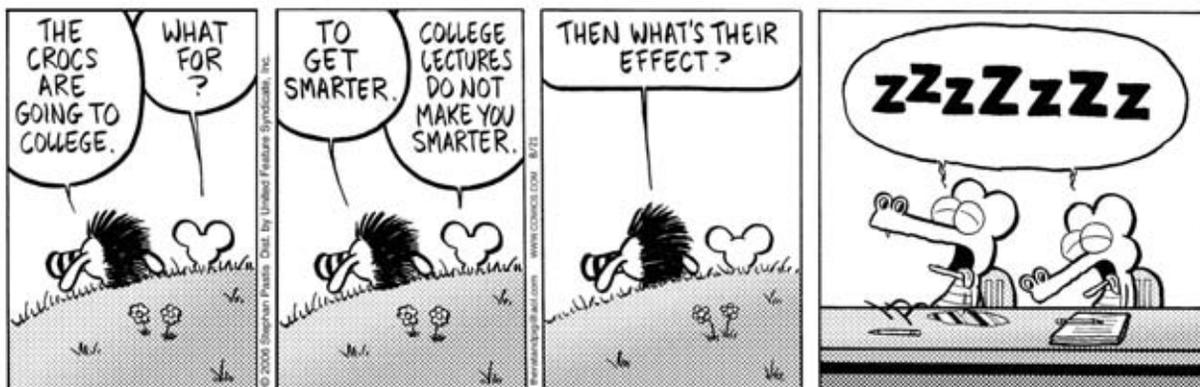
On September 8, the Dartmouth College Board of Trustees voted to dilute the role of elected alumni trustees—drastically changing Dartmouth's historic governance process. In a divided vote, board members voted to add eight unelected members and change the way future alumni elections are held. The college has refused to reveal the actual vote count.

These changes come after the alumni in 2006 roundly rejected similar changes to the election process in a vote on the alumni Constitution; four straight trustee election victories by petition-nominated, reform-minded alumni; and the 2007 election of a majority of reform petition candidates to the Executive Committee of the Dartmouth Association of Alumni. The board chairman claimed the changes would end "destructive politicization of trustee campaigns that have hurt Dartmouth."

What this means essentially is that the Dartmouth administration and its supporters on the board have now done by fiat what they could not do by alumni consent.

As ACTA president Anne Neal noted, "Having suffered six recent electoral defeats—as alumni in record numbers demanded independent voices on the board and Alumni Association—the Dartmouth establishment now found a different way to end the College's unique tradition of vibrant alumni involvement and participation."

ACTA has worked with Dartmouth alumni for years, whose loyalty and engagement have been a source of great strength. The board majority's refusal to respect that tradition marks a sad day in Dartmouth's history. We will keep you apprised of what happens next. ●



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE © Stephan Pastis/Dist. by United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

“SPEAKING UP”

Call for Accreditation Reform Reverberates

The work of the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education—a blue-ribbon group assembled in 2005—continues to be a major topic of discussion in Washington. ACTA president Anne Neal testified before the Commission last year, calling for a number of reforms, including an overhaul of federal accreditation and for institutions to “refocus their efforts on academic quality and accountability.” The Commission was listening, and accreditation was a major part of its report.

Why so much fuss about such a seemingly dry topic? Well, it's simple: to receive federal financial-aid dollars, a college has to be accredited. And while accreditors call it a “public-private partnership,” since they are “private” organizations, it's really a federal mandate. The accreditors are gatekeepers to federal funds.

The original intent was noble: to make sure diploma mills didn't get taxpayer money. But as it stands today, the system doesn't work. It doesn't guarantee quality. As ACTA's reports have pointed out, nothing in the accreditation process concretely measures student learning, instructional quality, or academic standards. Instead, accreditors focus on “inputs,” such as the number of books in libraries and the ratio of faculty to students. They also frequently put their focus on matters that are none of their business, such as governance and impose policies that undermine educational excellence. Typically, there is one accreditor in a region, with little or no competition. The actual accrediting visits are done by local faculty—so there's a strong incentive for clubbiness and conflicts of interest.



In 2002, ACTA was the first to call for change, with our report *Can College Accreditation Live Up to Its Promise?* And we did it again this year, with our new policy paper “Why Accreditation Doesn't Work and What Policymakers Can Do About It.” In the paper, we revisited the problems and included an “Action Agenda” on how to fix them, such as allowing regional accreditors to compete, decoupling accreditation from federal financial aid—since there are existing procedures to make sure institutions are financially healthy—and more.

We delivered the paper to every member of Congress, and its recommendations are finding real traction. The Council on Higher Education Accreditation—the major accreditors' group—issued a specific response and invited us to address its annual meeting. The American Enterprise Institute held a widely attended conference on accreditation, where ACTA spoke—along with Commission chairman Charles Miller; members Arthur Rothkopf, former president of Lafayette College, and Richard Vedder, director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity; and Jeff Sandefer—founder of the innovative Acton MBA—who offered prescriptions for reform. If you'd like to see the paper and Action Agenda, let us know using the enclosed envelope.

Congress is currently at work on this issue. We'll let you know what happens. ●

Three Great Minds Join ACTA

This fall, ACTA has had the pleasure of bringing aboard—in varying capacities—three extraordinary individuals.

First, two men with significant experience as university trustees (among many other things) have joined our Board of Directors. These are **Edwin Meese**, the former rector of George Mason University and attorney general of the United States, and **Edward Cox**, a trustee of the State University of New York. Mr. Meese is presently a distinguished fellow at the Heritage Foundation, and Mr. Cox is a partner at the New York firm of Patterson, Belknap, Webb and Tyler, LLP.

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The other addition is **Dr. Erin O'Connor**, who has joined us as a senior fellow. Dr. O'Connor, currently an English professor at the University of Pennsylvania, received a B.A. with highest honors and highest distinction in English from the University of California, Berkeley, where she was also a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and earned both her M.A. and Ph.D. in English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan. She is contributing key research and writing. ●

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