Bradley Project Puts Focus on American Identity

**E Pluribus Unum**—from many, one. That is the name of a compelling new report issued by the Bradley Project on America’s National Identity that finds America is facing an identity crisis. Funded by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and coordinated by ACTA, the report focuses on issues central to ACTA’s mission—civic education and the teaching of American history—and calls for a national conversation on these topics. Citing a number of ACTA studies, the report finds that American identity is weakening and that America is in danger of becoming “from one, many.” Underscoring this conclusion are sobering results of a new national poll, conducted for the Project by HarrisInteractive, where more than 60 percent of Americans surveyed believe that our national identity is getting weaker. More troubling, younger Americans are less likely than older Americans to believe in a unique national identity or even a unique American culture.

Over 200,000 visitors have already visited the project website and commentary has been widespread. ACTA friend David McCullough endorsed the report calling it “the clearest, most powerful summons yet, to all of us, to restore the American story to its rightful, vital place in American life and in how we educate our children.” And at the National Press Club event announcing the report, James C. Rees, executive director (continued on 3)
John Patrick, Professor  
School of Education, Indiana University  
Bloomington, IN  
“Congratulations! I have just finished reading the website copy of ‘E Pluribus Unum: the Bradley Project on America’s National Identity.’ This is a well written and compellingly argued piece. I am proud and honored to be listed among the contributors of ideas to the project. You have performed a great service for America. I will do my best to draw attention and readers to this work.”

Addison Barry Rand, Chairman  
Board of Trustees, Howard University  
Washington, DC  
“Thank you for including Howard University on your list to receive the Asking Questions, Getting Answers publication. While the Board of Trustees is in a perpetual state of introspection and evaluation, we have been conducting an extensive review surrounding Board Governance and Effectiveness. We can validate that the questions raised and subsequent answers received are all paramount to ensuring the health and stability of any institution. I applaud your organization for the insightful publication and appreciate being included in its distribution.”

David McCullough  
West Tisbury, MA  
“I’m sorry to say that I’m not able to attend the Roundtable meeting, but thank you very much for the invitation. Your Philip Merrill Award, in the view of this old Yalie, couldn’t go to anyone more deserving than Donald Kagan.”

Victoria Hughes, President  
The Bill of Rights Institute  
Arlington, VA  
“My colleagues at the Bill of Rights Institute and I read with great interest the Bradley Project report on America’s National Identity E Pluribus Unum. We are grateful for its articulation of the root causes of America’s identity crisis, the consequences of our weakened identity to America’s freedom, and possible solutions to this serious national problem. The release of the report is particularly well-timed with the 2008 presidential election causing many Americans for the first time to grapple with national issues and weigh different courses of action.”

ATHENA Preview

Don’t miss ACTA’s annual meeting, the ATHENA Roundtable. It’s coming up on October 17 at the New-York Historical Society, featuring a keynote by commentator Roger Rosenblatt—whose newest novel, Beet, is a brilliant satire of the politically correct university. Other speakers will include Columbia University provost emeritus William Theodore deBary, City University of New York Board of Trustees chairman Benno Schmidt, former University of Colorado president Hank Brown, and many more trustees, alumni, and leaders in what we’re calling “The Campaign for the American Mind.”

Following the Roundtable, we will hold a gala dinner to present this year’s Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. (See page 7 of this issue.) Beforehand, on the afternoon of October 16, Major General Josiah Bunting III—a Rhodes Scholar and Grant biographer—will lead a tour of the New-York Historical Society’s brand-new Grant and Lee exhibit. And that evening, members of ACTA’s Decade Society and Society of Fellows are invited to a special dinner with Lewis Lehrman, author of Lincoln at Peoria.

You can find a full schedule, and registration information, at www.goacta.org/events. If you’d like to attend, or if you have any questions, please call ACTA vice president Lauri Kempson at 202-467-6787.
Georgia Launches Study of Campus Climate

By Mallory A. Naill, ACTA Intern

Good things are happening in Georgia in light of ACTA’s recent report, Shining the Light: A Report Card on Georgia’s System of Public Higher Education.

As tuitions rise and more students prepare to enter college, the debate over what students are learning, how institutions are stewarding their resources, and whether the intellectual environment is healthy continues. ACTA’s report was designed to provide valuable answers to these questions while assigning “grades” for the University System of Georgia in four major areas of concern: curriculum, intellectual diversity, governance, and cost. Among other things, the report gave the System a failing grade for its failure to foster a classroom atmosphere open to the free exchange of ideas.

In the wake of the report’s findings, the university system has—in what is clearly a major development—commissioned a self-study of the campus climate. This is the first step to ensuring the free exchange of ideas and comes after four different First Amendment lawsuits were brought against institutions in the state—prompted by decisions to shut down free speech on campus.

Similar advances have already occurred over the past year at the University of Missouri and the City University of New York, where new grievance procedures have gone into effect. These mechanisms allow students to appeal to impartial university officials rather than faculty members who hold power over their grades. The University of Colorado Board of Regents has also endorsed a key intellectual diversity resolution. By focusing public and trustee attention on challenges in higher education, ACTA is helping bring about increased accountability on the part of institutions across the country.

Charles E.M. Kolb, president of the Committee for Economic Development, praised ACTA’s Georgia report, saying that he hopes it “will spark a renewed commitment to high standards and quality education for all students.” It looks like he’s getting his wish.

Bradley Project, continued from 1

84% of Americans believe that we “share a unique national identity based on a shared set of beliefs, values, and culture.” The younger one is, the less likely one is to believe there is a national identity.

Of the 84% of Americans who believe there is a national identity, 63% report that this identity is growing weaker.
NEA Calls for Action on Reading

In November, the National Endowment for the Arts conducted a study on American reading habits and found that despite recent progress in elementary reading ability, there has been a great decrease in adult and young adult reading. According to the study, *To Read or Not to Read*, which examined children, teenagers, and adults, and considered all varieties of reading, from fiction to online reading, there have been recent declines in both voluntary reading and test scores. Overall, people are reading fewer books, reading for less time, and have worse reading comprehension.

In the study’s executive summary, the value of reading and its impact on both personal development and professional success is discussed. There is a positive correlation between daily reading and academic achievement, and a positive correlation between poor reading skills and lower wages and unemployment. People who read well and often are more likely to become actively engaged in both civic and cultural life. Therefore the decline in reading and reading ability has “demonstrable social, economic, cultural, and civic implications.”

NEA chairman Dana Gioia states that the report itself is “a call to action,” and that if the decline in reading continues, “the nation will suffer substantial economic, social, and civic setbacks.”

We certainly agree.

To Require or Not to Require History—That Is the Question

By Anne D. Neal, ACTA President

Given our longtime focus on civic education and the teaching of American history, ACTA has been pleased to coordinate *E Pluribus Unum*, the report of the Bradley Project on America’s National Identity, co-authored by none other than our founding president, Jerry L. Martin.

The good news is that most U.S. citizens still believe there is a unique national identity that defines what it means to be an American. The troubling news is that younger Americans are less likely than older ones to believe in a unique national identity. Indeed, only 45 percent of 18-34 year old Americans believe that the U.S. Constitution should trump international law in instances where there is a conflict.

This statistic is surely troubling. But it is not surprising. As ACTA studies have repeatedly shown, colleges and universities today do not require their graduates to study American history or civics. Not a single one of the top 50 requires American history of its graduates; indeed, only seven require any history at all.

Is it any wonder that the most recent graduates identify less with America when they may know little about it?

That’s why—in this report and others—we have called for colleges and universities to mandate American history and government as a requirement for graduation, a recommendation that nearly 90 percent of Americans supported in the HarrisInteractive poll commissioned by the Bradley Project. In 2000, we helped usher a unanimous resolution through Congress calling on institutions to require American history. We have subsequently drafted a model bill for state legislatures, adopted by the American Legislative Exchange Council, which urges boards of trustees to adopt American history requirements—a requirement, I might add, that was put in place some time ago in the Lone Star State.

It’s our contention that higher education has an obligation to promote and encourage civic literacy. And it’s our firm belief that colleges will fulfill their responsibilities only when they confront the question of what students must learn, a question that most administrators—and trustees, for that matter—seek to avoid.

Restoring American history and government to its rightful place on the required reading list is an excellent place to start. And while, as many of you have noted, the very faculty who dismiss American national identity may in fact be the ones to teach it,
Hawaii Regent Urges Trustee Engagement

This April, ACTA and the American Enterprise Institute sponsored an incisive conference on university trusteeship called “Higher Ed Governance: Stewardship or Sham?” The half-day session brought together a diverse set of experts including the lead counsel pursuing student-loan scandals for New York attorney general Andrew Cuomo, an award-winning newspaper writer, and reform-minded trustees of several major universities.

One of these, University of Hawaii regent (and advisor to her alma mater, Cornell University) Jane B. Tatibouet, delivered particularly pointed remarks, drawing upon her long experience as a trustee. She noted that following her appointment and confirmation, “As chair of the Finance and Facilities Committees, I was asking questions and getting no answers; asking for routine reports, only to find that either they did not exist, or that I was ‘micromanaging.’” Despite these difficulties, she said, “Reform-minded trustees can make a critical difference and should be supported wherever they are identified and the issues are appropriate ones to encourage.”

Ms. Tatibouet—who is head of Hawaii’s Hotel Consultants LLC—also noted the problems accreditation can pose for trustees: “There needs to be a clear understanding of the role of accreditors and of their place at your college or university.” Too often, she says, the accreditors’ role has “evolved from an assurance of academic competence and measuring educational excellence, to seemingly not concerning themselves with this—focusing instead upon who is governing whom.” She said that from 2003 to 2005, Hawaii’s regional accreditor “descended upon the University of Hawaii and our Regents. We were being quizzed at length on how things were being done, or we were being told—in great detail—just how we should be doing things.” The clear message of this, she said, was “hands-off to the Regents.”

She elaborated: “Let the academics run the university. You, as Regents, stay at the 30,000 foot level and only in the rarest of situations should you ever come down to 10,000 feet and never lower. By the way, all of these directions were cloaked in the originally well-intended—now all too common—term of ‘best practices.’ Trustees must now question and challenge the term and make certain that it is truly a ‘best practice.’”

Academe needs more trustees like Jane Tatibouet—and we’re very thankful that she is promoting active stewardship by serving on our Institute for Effective Governance’s advisory board.

To Require History, continued from 4

ACTA believes that the idea that is America—the idea that is outlined so eloquently in E Pluribus Unum—has the power to inspire and inform students, however it is taught. The key is to expose students to primary documents, particularly those relating to the Founding. If those are used, students can read the Founding Fathers’ words themselves and make up their own minds.

Let me know what you think at aneal@goacta.org.
University of Delaware Disappoints
The University of Delaware Board of Trustees approved a controversial new Residence Life Program on May 19th. In its own words, the program seeks to shape and change students’ “thoughts, values, beliefs, and actions.” The board’s vote—taken at its semi-annual meeting—came over strenuous objections by ACTA, conveyed in letters to the board and personal consultations with board members.

The new program was developed to replace a program shut down last year by the university president after revelations that students were required to attend diversity training sessions and one-on-one meetings with Resident Assistants who would ask intrusive questions including, “When did you discover your sexual identity?” Students who disapproved of the questioning could be “written up” by RAs whose session summaries were given to the RAs’ superiors.

The original program aimed for students to reach certain “competencies.” These included “Students will recognize that systemic oppression exists in our society,” and “Students will recognize the benefits of dismantling systems of oppression.”

ACTA, other groups, and the Wall Street Journal condemned the revised residential life program as a warmed-over version of the earlier indoctrination. The new program approved by the board includes a session in which students are asked to post answers to highly personal questions on public bulletin boards such as for whom they will vote and how they define love. Also included is a plan for students to participate in a “simulated ‘shopping’ exercise” on environmental sustainability; to bring their “favorite material possessions” to a floor meeting; and to take part in a “discovery wheel” activity.

The “discovery wheel” activity, which was part of the old program and still remains, consists of an online self-evaluation questionnaire aimed specifically at freshmen. Last year, students were asked to rate themselves on a scale from “never true” to “always true” in relation to statements such as “I can effectively resolve conflict with people from other cultures” and “My writing and speaking are free of sexist expressions.” They were then asked to “explore” their visual chart with their peers.

“When parents send their children to college, they expect them to be educated, not indoctrinated,” ACTA president Anne Neal said after the decision. “Yet programs like Res Life at Delaware give administrators the ability to force feed students certain conclusions, and to do it on the taxpayer’s dime. Trustees should be vigilant and say no to these exercises in group think.”

ACTA is working hard to educate other trustees on this key issue—which affects many universities around the country.

Harvard President Expresses “Profound Appreciation” for ROTC Cadets
ROTC has long been a hot topic at Harvard—where the program is not allowed on campus, and students must travel to MIT to participate. But this year, there’s good news. In an encouraging display of support, new Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust spoke at the June 4 ROTC commissioning ceremony. She told the cadets, “You have awakened at dawn while your roommates slept in. You have jumped out of airplanes, challenged your bodies and your brains and become mentally and physically prepared for service. You have our respect for your choices, our admiration for your commitment, and our deep gratitude for your willingness to confront dangers on the nation’s behalf in the months and years to come.”

According to the New York Sun, alumnus Paul Mawn, who heads Advocates for Harvard ROTC, described Faust’s speech as “motivating.” A retired Navy commander who fought in the battles of Okinawa and Guadalcanal, Richard Bennink, went further, speculating that “it sounds like she wants ROTC back on campus.”

Faust’s presentation comes in the face of significant alumni and student support for the reinstatement of ROTC on campus. Earlier this year, Harvard alumnus and ACTA friend Robert Freedman ran as a petition candidate for the Harvard Board of Overseers. In response to a questionnaire from the Harvard Gay and Lesbian Caucus, Freedman outlined his vision for Harvard as a “place for intellectual and other exploration in an environment tolerant and supportive of all—those who want to explore … matters of concern to the Caucus as well as … those who want to explore serving in the military.”
Donald Kagan, Sterling Professor of Classics and History at Yale University, will receive this year’s Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education.

Famous for his scholarship on Greek and military history, his writings on issues facing higher education, and his geopolitical insights, Professor Kagan is known most among his students (this writer included) for his teaching. His “Introduction to Ancient Greece” is a Yale College institution; seniors who took the class as freshmen return the last day of term to hear the famous closing lecture tracing the history of oratorical opposition to tyranny from Demosthenes to Churchill.

Professor Kagan’s honors include a Fulbright Scholarship, the National Association of Scholars’ Sidney Hook Memorial Award, several National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships, the 2003 National Humanities Medal, service as the 2005 National Endowment for the Humanities Jefferson Lecturer, and a number of teaching awards.

The Merrill Award honors the late Philip Merrill, a distinguished public servant, publisher, and philanthropist who served as a trustee of his alma mater, Cornell University, and a charter member of ACTA’s National Council. It uniquely recognizes individuals who advance liberal arts education, core curricula, and the teaching of Western civilization and American history—to which he was passionately committed.

Professor Kagan will receive the Merrill Award on October 17th, at a special dinner in his honor following ACTA’s ATHENA Roundtable. If you would like to attend, please contact ACTA vice president Lauri Kempson at 202-467-6787 or lkempson@goacta.org.
ACTA's Institute for Effective Governance has just released its newest guide for trustees, *Asking Questions, Getting Answers*. The guide is the latest in a series that educates board members on such topics as *The Basics of Responsible Trusteeship*, *Strategic Planning*, *Assessing the President’s Performance*, and *The Spellings Commission and You*.

“If American higher education is to remain the best in the world, trustees must ask questions and obtain independent information,” said City University of New York trustee Kathleen M. Pesile, chair of the Institute’s Advisory Board. “But they often don’t know where to start. This guide has the answers, and trustees who want further assistance should call ACTA.” In a 2007 survey by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, less than 15 percent of trustees said they were “very well prepared” when they joined their boards; four in ten said they were “slightly” or “not at all” prepared. On the basis of these findings, *The Chronicle* dubbed trustees “willing, but not ready,” and *USA Today* said many “feel ill-prepared for the job.”

Responding to this problem, *Asking Questions, Getting Answers* is divided into five broad sections of questions targeting the most important areas of oversight for the board of any institution of higher education. These are “Academic Affairs,” “Student Learning,” “Faculty Hiring, Review, and Promotion,” “Financial Oversight and Costs,” and “Board Effectiveness.” By the time this issue of *Inside Academe* arrives in your mailbox, thousands of trustees—representing the top 300 universities in the country—will have received *Asking Questions, Getting Answers*. It’s also available on ACTA’s website, www.goacta.org.

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**Meet ACTA’s Interns**

Once again, ACTA’s generous supporters made possible a group of top-notch, hard-charging summer interns. They provided key contributions to our work—as well as engaged in a series of Intern Seminars with ACTA staff, board members, and experts such as ACTA friend Anthony Dick, who worked with the late William F. Buckley, Jr. on his new book on Sen. Barry Goldwater.

**Silveen Khan** is an Honor Roll senior at the Catholic University of America, where she is studying philosophy with a pre-law concentration. She is active in the Italian Club and the Philosophy Club, and speaks Italian, Spanish, and Urdu (in which she is proficient). She is a native of the Washington, DC area and spent one year as a member of the jury for Teen Court in Arlington, VA. She has been an ACTA intern since January, assisting with our research during the school year on a part-time basis. Upon graduation, she hopes to attend law school.

**Mallory A. Naill** is a senior at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, PA. She grew up near Gettysburg and interned last year at the Hanover Evening Sun, where she wrote feature articles on education and other issues. At Susquehanna, she is pursuing a double major in literature and

(continued on 11)
If there are two things that matter to ACTA, they’re American history and the next generation. We’re in business to make certain the next generation is educated properly, and that can’t be done unless they know their nation’s history. With that in mind, it’s only fitting that ACTA members have been treated to two recent colloquies on these topics.

First, author Joseph C. Smith, Jr.—himself an ACTA member, as well as the former deputy attorney general of Colorado—was the featured speaker at a June 12 Regional Meeting at the University Club in Denver. There, he gave an excellent speech on George Washington’s views on the issue of church and state. That’s the subject of his new book Under God, co-authored by Dallas-based author Tara Ross. Over 40 ACTA members and their friends were in attendance, and they gave Mr. Smith rave reviews. The reading public is apparently doing the same—the book just went to a second printing—and he is scheduled to speak at Mount Vernon.

Two weeks later, members of ACTA’s Decade Society and Society of Fellows gathered in Atlanta, at Emory University’s Faculty Dining Room, for a dinner discussion with Emory professor Mark Bauerlein. Dr. Bauerlein is a close friend of ACTA’s, as well as the author of an important new book entitled The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don’t Trust Anyone Under 30). His tome, like Joe Smith’s, is resonating—he has appeared on NPR, Fox News Channel, CBS Evening News with Katie Couric, and CNN. Thanks are due to Society members John and Audrey Wilson, Jane Fraser, and Joe Fulcher for helping assemble a wonderful audience of interested friends.

Members of ACTA’s donor societies form the inner circle of our supporters and receive exclusive invitations to attend—and to bring friends to—events like the discussion with Professor Bauerlein. If you’re interested in joining, please contact ACTA program director Charles Mitchell at 202-467-6787 or cmitchell@goacta.org.

ACTA is pleased to announce that Sandra E. Czelusniak, a graduate of Cornell University, has joined us as a program officer for policy. Sandy previously interned with the Center for American Studies at the Heritage Foundation and was a 2007 Publius Fellow with the Claremont Institute. Presently, she is pursuing her M.A. in history from Queen’s University Belfast in Northern Ireland. Sandy will be playing a prime role in producing ACTA’s policy work, including state report cards, in-depth reports on what colleges are really doing, and guides for trustees.

As we welcome Sandy, we say goodbye to Phyllis Palmiero, ACTA’s former policy director, who has just become vice president of the Collegiate School in Richmond, VA. And we express congratulations to program officer for trustee affairs Amy Averell who was recently chosen to participate in the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation’s Associate Program.

We are also pleased to report that president Anne Neal has been elected a board member of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society. Her fellow board members include news correspondent Cokie Roberts, former House Minority Leader Robert Michel, former Senator Paul Sarbanes and American Enterprise Institute scholar Norman Ornstein.
After years of struggle with the administration and faculty of Hamilton College, the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilizations (www.theahi.org) was founded last year as a fully independent off-campus center of learning and scholarship. On April 10-12, near the campus of Hamilton College, the AHI held its first annual colloquium: “Liberty and Slavery: The Civil War between Gerrit Smith and George Fitzhugh.”

Gerrit Smith, a summa cum laude Hamilton graduate, was an early abolitionist, founder of the Liberty Party and later the financial supporter of John Brown’s raid. He carried on an extensive correspondence with his southern cousin, George Fitzhugh, a confirmed supporter of slavery. The letters exchanged between the two served as readings for the colloquium whose titled sessions included “Christianity and Slavery,” “The Meaning of Freedom,” “Property and the Property in Man,” and, finally, “Race and Slavery.” Harvard University professor John Stauffer raised critical questions for further discussion in his after-dinner keynote address, “Gerrit Smith and the Ambiguities of Social Reform.”

Fifteen academic and non-academic scholars participated in each session. While over 200 attended the conference, most significant were the 60 students from Hamilton, Harvard, and Colgate University who had studied the primary source material and made significant contributions to the colloquium.

Through this conference and its other academic activities, the AHI is creatively demonstrating what can be done for student education by a small, determined group of alumni and faculty. ACTA is very proud to have supported the concerned alumni and faculty who brought this new “oasis of excellence” to fruition and to have our president, Anne Neal, serve as a member of the AHI’s Board of Directors.

Focusing on the American founding and its principles of political, economic, and religious freedom, the AHI successfully engages students in the open inquiry that is essential to a liberal arts education. Congratulations to all who have worked so hard to bring the AHI to life.
creative writing and serves as a public relations liaison for the Student Government Association and as an admissions tour guide. She is also president of the Student Activities Committee, the major programming body on campus. Upon graduation, Mallory hopes to attend graduate school in English with the goal of becoming a professor.

**Michael Leo Pomeranz** is a senior at Yale University, where he is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Fiat Lux*, a new journal of religion; a staff columnist for the *Yale Daily News*; a member of the Elizabethan Club; and a member of the Conservative Party. He has been a blogger for the *Washington Post*’s website and a student in Yale’s Directed Studies program, which concentrates on Western civilization. He is a National Merit Scholar and a recipient of the Phillips Foundation’s Ronald Reagan College Leaders Scholarship. As a high school student, he was one of the founders of the Muslim and Jewish Youth of Chicago. Michael joined ACTA as a Robert Lewit Fellow in Education Policy, through the generosity of Bob and Jane Lewit.

**James P. Terry** is a recent graduate of Hillsdale College, where he was an economics major. While at Hillsdale, James was active in the local Humane Society, the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity, and—for four years—the Hillsdale chapter of Big Brothers & Big Sisters. He grew up here in the Washington, DC area but later moved to California. James came to us through the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation, where his is also studying economics and management techniques. He hopes to pursue a career in non-profit fundraising.
National Council

Jacques Barzun, University Professor Emeritus, Columbia University

William J. Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education

Georgie Anne Geyer, Columnist, Universal Press Syndicate

Judith Richards Hope, former Member, Harvard Corporation; Distinguished Visitor from Practice, Georgetown University Law Center

Max M. Kampelman, former Head, Delegation to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Of Counsel, Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP

Irving Kristol, Senior Fellow Emeritus, American Enterprise Institute

Hans Mark, former Secretary of the Air Force; John J. McKetta Centennial Energy Chair in Engineering, University of Texas at Austin

Martin Peretz, Editor-in-Chief, The New Republic

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Richard D. Lamm, Vice Chairman; former Governor of Colorado; Co-Director, Institute for Public Policy Studies, University of Denver