



Promoting
Academic
Freedom and
Excellence

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ACTA Celebrates 25 Plus One Years of Higher Education Reform



ACTA President Michael Poliakoff moderates a discussion on the future of higher education with Purdue University President Mitch Daniels, Baylor University President Linda Livingstone, Northern Arizona University President Emerita Clara Lovett, George Washington University President Emeritus Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, and University of Chicago Chancellor Robert Zimmer.

ACTA thanks the hundreds of friends, supporters, and trustees who attended our 25th *Plus One* Anniversary Celebration. The two-day event took place on November 11–12 at the Metropolitan Club and the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. For over two decades, ACTA has worked tirelessly to solve the problems facing America's colleges and universities, and we have never been so inspired to keep leading the charge.

On November 12, attendees gathered at the Metropolitan Club for a colloquy entitled “**A Challenging Landscape: Presidents on the Future of Higher Education.**” John Altman, chair of ACTA's Board of Directors, opened the event, saying, “We are here because we know the power of higher education. . . . Thank you for being here to share our mission.”

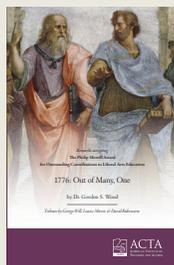
The colloquy included five distinguished university leaders: **Robert Zimmer**, former president and current chancellor of the Uni-

versity of Chicago; former Indiana governor and Purdue University President **Mitch Daniels**; George Washington University President Emeritus **Stephen Joel Trachtenberg**; Baylor University President **Linda Livingstone**; and former president of Northern Arizona University, **Clara Lovett**.

The panelists agreed that the key to curing the dysfunction plaguing higher education is absolute commitment to freedom of speech, wiser use of resources, and much greater collaboration between colleges and universities—big and small, prestigious and regional, faith-based and research-focused. As Dr. Lovett remarked, minority-serving schools, community colleges, and small local institutions are often overlooked in efforts to renew standards and support the best higher education has to offer. “We need to reevaluate the mission and role of schools that serve limited geographical areas, that aren't ranked in *U.S. News & World Report*, that enroll large num-

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Gordon Wood: “1776: Out of Many, One”



Dr. Gordon S. Wood, Alva O. Way University Professor and Professor of History Emeritus at Brown University

Remarks Accepting the 2021 Philip Merrill Award

In his brilliant acceptance speech, “1776: Out of Many, One,” Professor Wood explained how America's Founding principles formed a unified nation out of the vast array of ethnic groups that came to this country seeking freedom. We must uphold these values if we are to bind together our fractured nation. Download on GoACTA.org.

Richard Coyle
Scottsdale, Arizona

“Absolutely fabulous. Thanks for sending. Congrats for a) initiative to issue self-analysis, b) depth of factual results, c) explanatory text. Too few U.S. education and government institutions are as accountable and transparent as ACTA. Indeed, ACTA is the Gold Standard.”

Editor’s Note: In August, ACTA sent a mid-year report to our friends and supporters to share our progress to reform higher education in 2021 and our goals for the coming months.

Larry Penley
Arizona Board of Regents
Former president, Colorado State University

Thank you for having included Yolanda and me for the recognition of Karrin Taylor Robson. It was a special evening. We will continue to work to assure free speech on our campuses and to embed a more sophisticated understanding of American institutions in our curriculum.”

Abigail Thompson, Distinguished Professor of Mathematics
University of California–Davis

“That was an absolutely amazing weekend, thank you so much. I am trying to bask in the overwhelming feeling of support you and ACTA offered, it means a lot.”

Editor’s Note: On November 11–12, ACTA celebrated its 25th Plus One Anniversary. Abigail Thompson was honored as a Hero of Intellectual Freedom, and Karrin Taylor Robson accepted the Jerry L. Martin Prize for Excellence in College Trusteeship.

Dolores Gresham
Former Senator, Tennessee Senate
Former Representative, Tennessee House of Representatives

“I finally got a chance to sit down with *Then and Now!* No weasel wording or mealy mouthed phrases here! . . . Good work!”

Editor’s Note: Our 2020 annual report, Then & Now: ACTA’s 25-Year Drive to Restore the Promise of Higher Education, celebrates over two decades of ACTA’s work.

ACTA Webinar Helps Trustees Tackle College Spending

On September 22, ACTA hosted “Spending for Student Success: Effective Strategies for College Governing Boards to Control Costs,” a webinar focused on how trustees can cut spending and address the crippling student debt crisis.

The message from the panelists was clear: Fiscal reform is one of trustees’ most important duties. Commenting on his time as rector of George Mason University and as a former congressman, panelist **Tom Davis** said, “The buck stops with us . . . you owe a public duty to the whole community at large, and you are constantly balancing what it takes with the different stakeholders.”

Amy Jones, director for education and human services policy for the U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Education and the Workforce, discussed the challenges of coordinating effective spending policies. Congress has thrown “significant spending [at] schools through a multitude of

COVID relief bills, [but there is] so much money that it is becoming difficult for [institutions] to spend it in a targeted

[being] a promoter of the institution” and governing on behalf of the public interest, added **David Walsh**, former trustee of the

University of Central Florida. But, he continued, “the board is the last stop for cogent financial decision-making on fiscal management processes and prioritization of spending and strategy.” **James Toscano**, president of Partners for College Affordability and Public Trust, spoke about his organization’s efforts to mandate trustee training in Virginia: “What we found is that what really matters is the qualitative part—not just whether you have a training but what standard you are training people to meet.”

ACTA appreciates how seriously so many trustees approach their position as higher education fiduciaries. We look forward to

expanding our webinar series to provide trustees with more expert guidance as they seek to deliver a high-quality education at an affordable price. ●

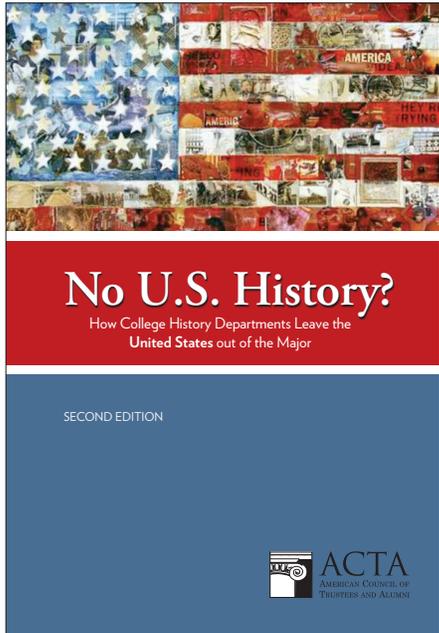


Armand Alacbay, David Walsh, James Toscano, and Amy Jones discuss how trustees can control spending at their institutions.

way. We wanted to be . . . as helpful as possible . . . while still trying to maintain some guard rails.”

“There’s this balancing act between

ACTA Releases Expanded Second Edition of *No U.S. History?*



In November, ACTA released the second edition of *No U.S. History? How College History Departments Leave the United States out of the Major*. The report traces the disappearance of an American history requirement from the history major at 73 of the nation’s top colleges and universities. Examining university catalogs going back nearly 70 years, we asked whether the baccalaureate major, as well as the core curriculum, required all students to complete a course in U.S. history in 1952, 1976, 2000, and 2020.

We found that of the top 25 national universities, as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, only one, the University of California–Berkeley, requires history majors to complete a wide-ranging course in U.S. history. Of the top 25 public universities, just four require all history majors to complete a course in U.S. history. And only three of the top 25 liberal arts colleges require history majors to complete a course in U.S. history.

The absence of U.S. history requirements was not always the case. Eleven of the 16 leading public universities required history majors to complete a course in U.S. history in 1952. Only two do today. Similarly, a majority of the liberal arts colleges evaluated in the report, 10 out of 18, required history majors to complete a course in U.S. history in 1952. Just three do today.

For much of our nation’s past, universities took seriously the profound responsibility to educate students about their country’s history and cultivate civic virtues. The consequences of failing to graduate students with an understanding of our common

inheritance as Americans and knowledge of our government are sadly evident in the well-documented crisis of civic illiteracy and coarsening political dialogue.

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ACTA Board Member’s *Abigail & John* Digitized by WETA

ACTA is pleased to announce that *Abigail & John* (Liberty Bell Press), a children’s book about America’s history written by ACTA Board Member **David Bruce Smith**, has been digitized by Reading Rockets. Reading Rockets is an education initiative of WETA—the leading public broadcasting station in the nation’s capital—that provides high-quality online resources to children who are struggling to learn how to read. The book is featured on the Reading Rockets booklist, “From the American Revolution to a New Nation.” In addition, Mr. Smith’s book has been animated by the Museum of the American Revolution.

Abigail & John, beautifully illustrated by Clarice Smith, provides young readers with a window into America’s history through the lives of Abigail and John Adams. “Exploring the historical significance of a partnership that spanned over five decades, the book details the love they shared for each other and the country.”

David Bruce Smith is the founder of the Grateful American® Foundation and co-founder of the Grateful American Book Prize. The Foundation seeks to restore interest and enthusiasm about America’s history. *Abigail & John* is the inaugural book



in the Grateful American Book Series, which focuses on presidential and historical marriages that have had an impact upon the nation’s development. ●

ACTA Releases What Will They Learn?[®] 2021–2022 College Ratings

On September 29, ACTA released the 2021–2022 edition of our signature college ratings report, *What Will They Learn?* (WWTL). Each year, this report, along with its companion website, WhatWillTheyLearn.com, helps thousands of students and families across the country select a school that will prepare graduates for meaningful careers and informed citizenship. WWTL grades over 1,100 schools on an “A” through “F” scale based on how many of the following subjects they require in their core curricula: Composition, Literature, (intermediate) Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural Science.

This year, 423 schools earned a “D” (requiring 2 subjects) or an “F” (requiring 0–1 subject). Fewer than half of the colleges surveyed required all students to complete a course in economics (3%), foreign language (12%), literature (31%), or U.S. government or history (18%). But there are many colleges that show a much greater commitment to a stronger core curriculum. In the 2021–2022 cycle, 14 schools added a

foundational course in U.S. government or history. Together, these institutions graduate nearly 22,000 students annually. ACTA’s work in Arizona, Florida, and South Carolina has helped put strong American history and civic

in bringing the pressure of students and their families to bear on higher education. The public needs to know that weak general education programs often come at a high price. Average tuition and fees at Ivy League institutions have risen to \$57,752, and students attending a top-10 *U.S. News & World Report* liberal arts college can expect to pay on average \$56,612. Yet, many schools in both of these groups received low grades for their core curricula. In contrast, “A”-rated schools charge, on average, only \$27,656 in tuition and fees.

“Unfortunately, most college rankings systems drive prices up without improving the quality of education being delivered,” stated ACTA Vice President of Academic Affairs Jonathan Pidluzny. “That is why we built a college choice tool focused on what schools are actually teaching.” ACTA President Michael Poliakoff added, “Campus leaders owe it to their students to improve the academic experience so that graduates are prepared for professional success.”

Please visit WhatWillTheyLearn.com to explore the 2021–2022 ratings. ●



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

knowledge requirements on the books. Also, nine schools added a composition requirement, and six added or improved their mathematics requirement.

We have expanded our outreach to 51,000 school counselors and thousands of school principals to enlist their help

The King’s College Becomes Newest “A” School

The King’s College in New York, NY, is the newest school to join ACTA’s “A”-list in our *What Will They Learn?* annual college ratings report. “A”-rated schools require students to take 6–7 foundational subjects as part of the core curriculum. Students at King’s College must take courses in Composition, Literature, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural Science in order to be eligible for graduation, missing only a required Foreign Language course.

Just 24 colleges or universities nationwide earn a coveted “A” grade. By offering a structured curriculum focused on core liberal arts subjects, these schools ensure that graduates will cultivate the critical thinking skills, analytical abilities,

and written and oral communication skills that are essential to preparing them to be informed citizens and competitive candidates in a dynamic workplace.

The King’s College is a Christian liberal arts school that is committed to giving students “a robust intellectual foundation for principled leadership throughout society.” All students receive close mentorship from faculty members and study a challenging curriculum focused on politics, philosophy, and economics.

ACTA welcomes King’s College to our prestigious “A”-list, and we encourage students and their families to consider schools that prioritize academic excellence and student success. ●

ACTA Recognizes Dorian Abbot as Hero of Intellectual Freedom



Dorian Abbot, associate professor in the Department of the Geophysical Sciences at the University of Chicago, has been recognized as an ACTA Hero of Intellectual Freedom for his commitment to merit-based standards and the free exchange of ideas.

In the early fall, Professor Abbot was invited to give the prestigious John

Carlson Lecture before the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences. In August, he co-authored an article in *Newsweek*, proposing an alternative to diversity, equity, and inclusion policies called "Merit, Fairness, and Equality" policies, whereby "university applicants are treated as individuals and evaluated through a rigorous and unbiased process based on their merit and qualifications alone." The new framework would also include "an end to legacy and athletic admission advantages, which significantly favor white applicants, in addition to those based on group membership."

A social media mob formed on Twitter to attack Professor Abbot for his article, and a group of MIT students, faculty, and alumni demanded that he be disinvited from delivering the Carlson Lecture. MIT withdrew Dr. Abbot's invitation. In a piece describing the episode, Dr. Abbot wrote, "It's worth stating what happened again: a small group of ideologues mounted a Twitter campaign to cancel a distinguished science lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology because they disagreed with some of the political positions the speaker had taken. And they were successful within eight days. . . . The fact that MIT, one of the greatest universities in the world, caved in so quickly will only encourage others to deploy this same tactic."

On announcing Professor Abbot's recognition as a Hero of Intellectual Freedom, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff remarked, "In addition to his distinguished contributions to geological science, Dr. Abbot has rendered a service to the academy by challenging its reliance on criteria other than individual merit in student admissions and in faculty hiring. Like his work in natural science, his challenges to academic procedure call out for discussion, not a cowardly cancellation of an honor due to him for his scientific contributions."

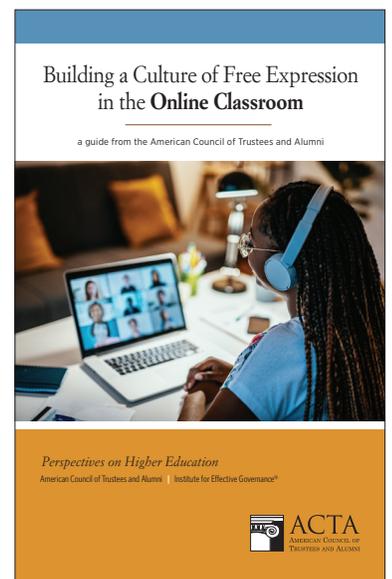
The Hero of Intellectual Freedom award honors members of the academy who courageously defend intellectual diversity and free expression when others remain silent. ●

Protecting Free Expression in the Online Classroom

In September, ACTA released *Building a Culture of Free Expression in the Online Classroom*, an examination of lessons learned from the transition to remote learning in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The guide features recommendations from eight distinguished scholars and education leaders: Professor David Corey of Baylor University; Professor Jeffrey M. McCall of DePauw University; Professor Geoffrey R. Stone of the University of Chicago Law School; Professor Jonathan Zimmerman of the University of Pennsylvania; Director of the University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Education Michelle Deutchman; Noodle Partners CEO John Katzman; Speech First President Nicole Neily; and Nadine Strossen, former president of the American Civil Liberties Union.

How can faculty build trust to preserve the classroom as a haven for robust discourse? Professor Zimmerman writes, "Students are afraid . . . of saying the 'wrong' thing, which might subject them to rejection and ridicule from their peers. And some faculty reinforce this repressive atmosphere by propagandizing instead of teaching . . . So, in my own classroom, I try to bring in as many perspectives as I can. . . I make it clear that everyone should be able to express their own ideas, free of intimidation from others." Professor Corey shares, "the 'record' feature on most platforms allows for a level of policing and reporting that might stifle conversation between even the most intimate of friends. Thus, we have to work extra hard as teachers to . . . lay the ground rules more explicitly than we have before and to demonstrate *personally* those virtues of civility that we hope to see exhibited in our students."

How can college leaders ensure that their institutions do not give in to social media mobs calling for a professor to be "canceled"? Ms. Neily recommends that "prior to the start of the school year, public universities should notify all students—both new and returning—what the First Amendment is and its role on campus. Sadly, far too many lack this basic understanding, and they demand the school to be judge, jury, and executioner of their peers when an unwelcome opinion is aired—and this impetus needs to be curtailed by colleges, not encouraged." Please visit GoACTA.org to download the report. ●



ACTA's 25th Plus One Anniversary Celebration (cont'd)

Presidential Colloquy, *continued from 1*

bers of first-generation students who need a strong liberal arts education.”

President Livingstone shared that the student debt crisis, decreasing return on investment, and the intensity of the culture wars on college campuses have contributed to waning confidence in higher education. “This is not in the best interest of anyone in our country, whether on the Right or the Left. We have a responsibility to be attentive to those issues and address them while still providing an excellent education to help students be leaders when they go into the world. . . . We have the best system in the world, but we can't stay in the past. We need to evolve toward the future.”

Some of the biggest flashpoints on campus—cancel culture and censorship—also presents some of the best opportunities to bring all higher education stakeholders together. Presidents, trustees, faculty, alumni, and students must all raise their voices to protect free inquiry and intellectual diversity. “It turns out that all citizens need to be involved in protecting free expression,” said Dr. Trachtenberg. Dr. Zimmer added that rather than responding with fear to protests or disinvitation attempts, college leaders must remind students and faculty that the protection of minorities and advancement of all groups throughout history have relied upon freedom of speech and the courage to advance heterodox viewpoints.

“The root cause of so much that troubles us,” said President Daniels, “is lack of strong oversight from trustee boards.” Governing boards ought to have an intimate knowledge of every important issue on campus, know what and when to delegate, and most importantly, know when to act. The “nobility of ACTA's mission,” he shared, is being there to provide trustees with the most innovative and proven strategies to help them fulfill their obligation to their students and to the nation. ●

Abigail Thompson Receives Hero of Intellectual Freedom Award

Following the colloquy, ACTA presented the **Hero of Intellectual Freedom** award to Abigail Thompson, professor of mathematics at the University of California–Davis. In 2019, Dr. Thompson spoke out against the use of diversity statements to evaluate candidates for STEM positions. In her post as chair of the Department of Mathematics, she was asked by the administration to filter hundreds of candidates for job openings solely based on their diversity statements, without even considering their academic records.

Fellow mathematician, University of Chicago Chancellor Robert Zimmer, delivered a tribute to Dr. Thompson. “Abby richly deserves the Hero of Intellectual Freedom award. . . . The goal of education is not just to transmit knowledge, but to foster intellectual skills and habits of mind to be successful in life, and one of the most important habits of mind is independent thought. Those habits are

critical for faculty to advance research.” By articulating her position against the new standards not just to her department and institution, but also to the American

the pale that some called for public shaming and for removing me from my job.” The STEM disciplines, once considered to be immune to the forces of cancel culture and censorship, are now under assault. She shared that many professors across the country wrote to express admiration for her courage but also fear to speak out against similar trends at their own schools.

“I believe that if universities pursue excellence and continue to remove barriers for minorities and women, and assess people as individuals, we will achieve diversity. ACTA is so important as a voice encouraging this,” along with organizations like

the Alumni Free Speech Alliance and the new University of Austin. “I hope they are beginning to make a difference.”

Dr. Thompson was presented with a portrait of John Stuart Mill, who famously said, “He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that.” ●



President Michael Poliakoff with Professor Abigail Thompson and Chancellor Robert Zimmer.

Mathematical Society, “she delivered the message to others that it is possible to take action, and they can do it, too.”

In her acceptance remarks, Professor Thompson described the backlash she received for expressing her viewpoint. “My opinions were attacked as so far beyond

Dr. Gordon S. Wood Receives 2021 Merrill Award

Our 25th Anniversary Celebration culminated at the Library of Congress. ACTA President Michael Poliakoff welcomed nearly 300 ACTA friends for the presentation of the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education to Dr. Gordon S. Wood. Among America's most distinguished historians, Dr. Wood has served on the faculty of Brown University, Harvard University, the University of Michigan, William & Mary, and Cambridge University. His books on the Founding and the American Revolution have won many awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1993 for *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*.

Catherine Merrill, CEO of *Washingtonian* magazine and daughter of the late Philip Merrill, presented Dr. Wood with a Founding-era fire bucket. The fire bucket is emblazoned with an eagle, shield, and 13 stars, symbolizing Dr. Wood's dedication to the teaching and understanding of the story of early America. Tributes to Dr. Wood were delivered by *Washington Post* columnist George Will, New-York Historical Society President and CEO Louise Mirrer, and historian and philanthropist David Rubenstein. Mr. Will shared that at a time when false ideas about America's Founding abound, "Gordon Wood's scholarship is sufficient . . . challenge of fashionable

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Presentation of Philip Merrill Award



Gordon Wood delivers his remarks at the Library of Congress



Louise Mirrer



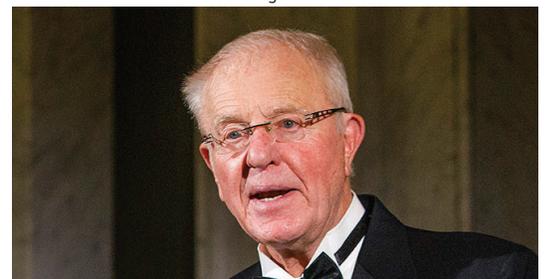
David Rubenstein



Catherine Merrill, Michael Poliakoff, and Gordon Wood



George Will



ACTA Board Chair John Altman

Karrin Taylor Robson Receives Martin Prize

On November 11 at the Metropolitan Club in Washington, DC, ACTA honored **Karrin Taylor Robson** with the **Jerry L. Martin Prize for Excellence in College Trusteeship**. Ms. Taylor Robson served on the Arizona Board of Regents from 2017 to July 2021, and she recently announced her campaign for Arizona governor.

The Martin Prize, named after ACTA's founding president, Jerry L. Martin, was created to recognize college and university trustees who demonstrate strong leadership in service to students and the public.

Since first stepping into her role on the Arizona Board of Regents, Ms. Taylor Robson has passionately advanced civic education. She created the Regents' Cup, a debate competition between Arizona State University's three campuses that fosters vibrant democratic engagement. She also uses her voice to protect free expression and fight viewpoint discrimination at Arizona's public universities. As ACTA President Michael Poliakoff noted, "Karrin Taylor Robson stands out for her discernment, seeing the places where universities can and must do better, and indefatigable determination to ensure

the very best for the students and the public."

In her acceptance speech, Ms. Taylor Robson remarked, "The success of the Regents' cup and its core commitment to free speech and civil discourse is a beacon of hope . . . The degree to which we are successful in our mission is the extent to which we

will restore education here in America. Anything short of our success will sound the death knell not only for education, but for America and the West. But if we succeed, we will all do so knowing that we will be supplying, not just our generation, but future generations to come, with not just the knowledge of things like free speech and freedom of conscious, but the experience of free speech and freedom of conscious."

Tributes to Ms. Taylor Robson were delivered

by Michael Crow, president of Arizona State University, and William Bennett, secretary of education under Ronald Reagan. An 1858 newspaper printing of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate was presented to her in honor of her outstanding work to promote the free exchange of ideas. ●



Merrill Award, *continued from 7*

tendentious." His work, Mr. Rubenstein stated, "gives us the true story," recognizing both the flaws of the Founding Fathers and their extraordinary achievements in astonishing circumstances.

In his acceptance speech, "1776: Out of Many, One," Professor Wood remarked, "The desire for social justice is overwhelming the need for historical accuracy." Today, it is popular "to declare that the revolution was a failure." Efforts by the *New York Times'* 1619 Project to reframe American history have resulted in a number of patently false claims, including that the colonists fought for independence in order to preserve slavery. Rather, Dr. Wood commented, the United States became the first nation "to begin actively suppressing the despicable international slave trade." To make slavery the frame through which we evaluate every moment of our nation's history will only serve to "divide us further and undermine whatever sense of comity and unity we have left."

"Lincoln used the phrase in the Declaration that all men are created equal in order to make a nation out of an ethnically and racially diverse people who lacked a common ancestry. . . . The Revolution and the documents and ideals that came out of it are the bonds, the adhesives, that make us a nation. . . . Without the Founding of 1776, we will never be the 'one People' the elcaration says we are."

ACTA is grateful for Dr. Wood's commitment to ensuring that Americans understand the values that guided the creation of our nation, and we thank all of our supporters who make possible our important work to advance academic excellence and promote the free exchange of ideas. ●



C H E A R D C A M P U S O N

College Student Marijuana Use at All-time High

In September, the National Institute on Drug Abuse released the results of the 2020 *Monitoring the Future* study, which has tracked substance use among college students and non-college young adults since 1980. The study revealed that college students' marijuana use is at the highest level since the 1980s, with 44% of college students reporting marijuana use in the past year, compared to 38% in 2015. Daily or near daily use of marijuana has also continued to increase, with 8% of students reporting daily use in 2020, compared to 5% in 2015. In addition, there was a significant increase in the use of hallucinogens, with 9% of students reporting use of hallucinogens in the past year, compared to just 5% in 2019.

Marijuana use has hurtled upward as more states legalize the drug. Marijuana corporations and lobbyists attempt to market the drug as safe for recreational use, contradicting extensive research into the effects of THC on the brain. As ACTA reported in its 2019 guide, *Addressing College Drinking and Drug Use*, marijuana use decreases academic engagement and contributes to depression and anxiety and to other serious mental health problems, including psychosis.

Earlier this year, ACTA held a webinar for college trustees, administrators, and mental health professionals on creative strategies to de-normalize alcohol and drug use on campus, and we are preparing more initiatives to tackle this urgent challenge in 2022. ●

No U.S. History?, continued from 3

The problem is not, as the report observes, that Americans are uninterested in their history. "In a recent survey, fully 77% of respondents expressed 'a great deal' or 'some' interest in learning about U.S. history. And in legislatures and school board meetings around the country, parents and civic leaders are pushing back against efforts to politicize the social studies curriculum. The evidence all suggests that Americans care deeply about the country's past."

Rather, the report documents, "the problem is that colleges are not teaching what students yearn to learn and know." The decline in the quantity of history majors and quality of history programs corresponds to historians' overall abandonment of political history in favor of social history. Furthermore, "while required American history courses have largely disappeared, a requirement that students complete coursework treating non-U.S. and non-Western countries and societies is almost universal." Rather than a clear set of requirements based on focused regional study, history majors must choose from "thematic" tracks

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ACTA Brings Students Together at Anniversary Celebration

As part of our 25th Anniversary Celebration, ACTA hosted 15 students for an afternoon conference entitled, "Confronting Cancel Culture: How Student Leaders Can Foster Free Expression on Campus." Faculty within our Oases of Excellence network nominated students for the event. Attendees hailed from Christopher Newport University, Marshall University, Hamilton College, and Ashland University.

Over lunch, April Kornfield, director of debates at Braver Angels, led an interactive session on how to promote free expression on campus. Students shared their own strategies for combating censorship and advancing civil discourse. Following lunch, Doug Sprei, ACTA's director of multimedia and campus partnerships, moderated "Leading by Example," a panel discussion with Manu Meel, CEO of BridgeUSA; Emily Garcia, national director of youth development at BridgeUSA; Luke Nathan Phillips, Publius Fellow for Public Discourse at Braver Angels; and Daniel Acosta Rivas, co-founder of Students for Free Expression. The afternoon concluded with remarks by Abigail Thompson, professor of mathematics at the



University of California–Davis and an ACTA Hero of Intellectual Freedom. Professor Thompson encouraged attendees to be courageous in the face of obstacles as they seek to make a difference at their schools.

ACTA is encouraged by the enthusiasm of these civic-minded student leaders. We extend our thanks to Joe Woodford and the Merrill Family Foundation, who made this event possible. ●



2021 Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference

On September 3, ACTA's Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR) hosted the 2021 Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference in Washington, DC. The conference serves as a forum for faculty directors to discuss best practices for forming an "Oasis of Excellence" on their campus. The over 70 programs in our Oases of Excellence network share a mission to educate students for informed citizenship and ensure free inquiry into a diverse range of intellectual viewpoints.

This year's conference focused on protecting free speech, fundraising, and the indispensable role of the liberal arts in developing engaged and informed citizens. The three panels were chaired by experienced faculty who advised directors on how to build relationships with administrators and attract donors who are committed to supporting the liberal arts and the free exchange of ideas. In the final panel, Professor Allison Stanger of Middlebury College highlighted the importance of cultivating in students "a love of learning and [the ability] to think for themselves."

The conference concluded with a dinner and keynote speech by Cornell University Professor Barry Strauss. Dr. Strauss wove a beautiful tribute to the late Donald Kagan, who passed away in August, into a compelling case for the enduring power of the classics and the liberal arts.

ACTA's partnerships with Oases of Excellence programs are a critical part of our work to renew liberal education at America's colleges and universities. We will continue to provide resources and advice to Oases directors as they expand their programs to reach more students. ●



Professors and guests attend the Fund for Academic Renewal's 2021 Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference at the Cosmos Club in Washington, DC.

Regent Ganahl Leads Effort to Monitor Foreign Funding

Heidi Ganahl, a member of ACTA's Board of Directors and a member of the University of Colorado (CU) Board of Regents, recently led the CU Board to approve three resolutions to monitor funding from foreign nationals and foreign governments. According to *CU Boulder Today*, the first resolution "will ensure that relationships with foreign or national governments are conducted appropriately and in accordance with the requirements of federal law," and the second resolution requires each CU campus to provide an annual report to the Board of Regents' Audit Committee that summarizes all gifts, contracts, or grants from foreign sources with a value of at least \$100,000.

The third resolution states that "no

CU campus will permit affiliation with any entity related to the Confucius Institutes unless such affiliation has been expressly permitted under the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, given cautions by federal law enforcement agencies that the Confucius Institutes may be a vehicle for state-sponsored espionage and warnings by the American Association of University Professors and the National Association of Scholars that the practices of the Confucius Institutes represent a threat to norms of academic freedom."

Colleges and universities have come under scrutiny in recent years for housing Confucius Institutes, cultural centers that are backed by the Chinese Communist Party. This year, the U.S. Senate renewed

legislation that prevents the Department of Defense from funding universities with Confucius Institutes. Many schools are now terminating their campus Confucius programs. In March, Tufts University closed one such center after weeks of protests from members of the Tibetan, Uyghur, Hongkonger, Taiwanese, and Chinese communities who decried the Chinese government's ongoing Uyghur genocide, occupation of Tibet, and crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong.

ACTA applauds Regent Heidi Ganahl and the CU Board of Regents for protecting academic freedom and closely reviewing relationships with foreign funders through these important resolutions. We encourage more universities to take similar action. ●

In Memoriam: Donald Kagan and Carl Menges



Below are excerpts from a tribute by ACTA President Michael Poliakoff to **Donald Kagan**, beloved friend and eminent scholar, who passed away on August 6, 2021.

“It was my great good fortune in 1972 to attend Donald Kagan’s storied undergraduate course on the history of ancient Greece. . . . So began a lifelong friendship, for

Donald Kagan was not only a teacher, but also a mentor for his students, and at almost all the crucial junctures of my professional life, I could call on him for thoughtful, cogent advice.

“In 1969, he took a position at Yale University. His reputation as a distinguished and highly respected professor continued to grow, as did his international distinction as a scholar. His monumental, four-volume history of the Peloponnesian War remains a standard work for the professional historian, but his jargon-free, common-sense approach to history makes it a joy for the general reader as well. . . . For his scholarship, he was awarded the National Medal for the Humanities by President George W. Bush in 2002, and in 2005, he delivered the National Endowment for the Humanities’ Jefferson Lecture.

“If Donald Kagan’s reputation could only rest on his scholarship and teaching, he would hold a most distinguished place among the leaders of American intellectual life. But that would be to overlook his deep and courageous commitment to the ethics of the academy. . . . It was Donald Kagan who confronted former Yale president Kingman Brewster about the university’s failure to protect free speech, and he played a pivotal role in preparing the way for the C. Vann Woodward Committee Report on Freedom of Expression at Yale.

“Dr. Kagan won numerous teaching awards throughout his career, and in 2004, ACTA presented him with the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education in recognition of his dedication to promoting the study of the humanities, especially history, and to encouraging the free and open exchange of ideas.

“ACTA mourns the passing of this staunch ally. . . . He will be greatly missed.”



ACTA mourns the death of **Carl Menges**, who passed away on September 8, 2021. Mr. Menges was a faithful and generous supporter of ACTA’s efforts to reform higher education. He served on our board of directors from 2012 to 2018.

Throughout his life, he worked to ensure that college students learn about America’s history and ideals, and he was a founding member of the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization, an ACTA Oasis of Excellence focused on advancing freedom, democracy, and capitalism. A longtime trustee at Hamilton College, his alma mater, Mr. Menges made it his mission to enrich the marketplace of ideas on campus and underwrote an influential 2001 conference on Alexander Hamilton. The papers presented at the conference were collated into a book dedicated to Mr. Menges, entitled, *The Many Faces of Alexander Hamilton*.

Mr. Menges led an impressive career in business and finance, rising to the position of vice chairman at the investment banking firm Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette before its purchase by Credit Suisse in 2000. He also served the firm in many other positions, including as chairman and as CEO of Wood, Struthers & Winthrop Management Corp. He was committed to civic, cultural, and educational institutions and served as a trustee of the Boys Club of New York; treasurer and trustee of the Allen Stevenson School; member of the Council on Foreign Relations; a trustee of the New-York Historical Society; and a life trustee of the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City.

His good humor, expertise, and passion for advancing academic excellence were a driving force behind ACTA’s work. We are deeply grateful for his contributions to ACTA and to our country’s civic institutions, and we will remember him fondly. ●

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that correspond with professors’ narrow research specialties: for example, “Environmental History, Gender and Sexuality, and Race and Racism” at Colgate University.

Renewing civic education must start in history departments. “What colleges need most is to review and reform their curricula, and curricular self-examination and reform can be done at little or no financial cost.” *No U.S. History?* also includes ways that trustees, policymakers, and alumni can use their influence to ensure that colleges and universities educate students for informed citizenship. We are grateful to ACTA Director David Bruce Smith for his encouragement and generous support of this project. Please contact ACTA to request a copy of the report. ●



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INSIDE ACADEME

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The background of the lower half of the page is a photograph of the interior of the Library of Congress. It shows a grand, ornate hall with high ceilings, large arched windows, and classical architectural details like columns and statues. The floor is filled with rows of study tables and bookshelves, with several people visible working or reading.

26 years ago, ACTA's founders looked into the future and saw the urgency of what would become our work and mission. And on November 12, at the spectacular Library of Congress, we celebrated 25-plus years of dedication to the freedom of discourse and high standards that are the lifeblood of higher education.

We could never have even begun to do this work without you, our donors. Your generosity supports ACTA's publications and programs that are effecting the changes our nation so desperately needs.

Thank you for bringing us to this moment with victories and achievements to celebrate, and yet more still before us.

Wishing you a holiday filled with joy and hope,

President Michael Poliakoff & the ACTA Staff