



*Promoting
Academic
Freedom and
Excellence*

Celebrating Diversity Done Right: 2022 ATHENA Roundtable



Jonathan Rauch, Dorian Abbot, John Chisholm, Amna Khalid, and Glenn Loury participate in a rigorous discussion on diversity, equity, and inclusion at America's colleges and universities.

ACTA's 2022 ATHENA Roundtable and Gala was an extraordinarily illuminating success, thanks to our distinguished presenters, the dedicated work of our staff, and the enthusiasm and generosity of our friends and supporters. On October 21, over 130 students, education leaders, and ACTA friends heard two interactive panel discussions: "Diversity Done Right" and "How Civil Discourse Can Change Campus Culture." In the Q&A sessions following each panel, audience members from across the political spectrum posed many thought-provoking questions.

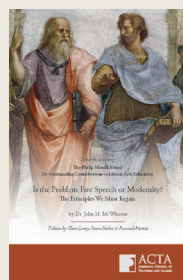
Brookings Institution Senior Fellow **Jonathan Rauch** moderated the first panel, which featured **Glenn Loury**, Merton P. Stoltz Professor of the Social Sciences at Brown University; **Dorian Abbot**, associate professor of geophysical sciences at the

University of Chicago; **Amna Khalid**, associate professor of history at Carleton College; and **John Chisholm**, former member of the MIT Corporation and current member of the MIT Free Speech Alliance. The panelists agreed that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) bureaucracies threaten academic freedom and stifle the free exchange of ideas. Mr. Chisholm observed that by unduly focusing on racial and gender diversity, colleges overlook geographic, economic, cognitive, and political diversity. He proposed that rather than pursue colorblind admissions, colleges should add these additional dimensions, which could increase the representation of rural, low-income, and politically conservative students.

Professor Abbot—who received ACTA's Hero of Intellectual Freedom award for his

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Is the Problem Free Speech or Modernity?



Dr. John H. McWhorter
Remarks Accepting the 2022 Philip Merrill Award: "Is the Problem Free Speech or Modernity? The Principles We Must Regain"

We will soon publish the incisive and passionate remarks that Professor John McWhorter delivered as he accepted ACTA's 17th annual Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. Dr. McWhorter describes the anti-modern and often condescending assumptions undergirding contemporary conversations about race, and he calls for a new way of thinking based on the principles of the Enlightenment. **Download on GoACTA.org.**

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**Amna Khalid, Associate Professor of History
Carleton College**

“Just wanted to say how much I enjoyed my visit and getting to spend time with you and others at ACTA. You all put on a fantastic event—the hospitality and attention to detail was remarkable! Please pass my compliments and gratitude to the entire team.”

**Tom Hafer, Founding Member
MIT Free Speech Alliance**

“I just wanted to follow up and tell you that I thought the ACTA conference and gala were first-class events and that I appreciated your having me and my guests there. . . . simply getting that many profound people into a single event is quite an achievement.”

**John E. Craig, Jr., Chairman
Davidsonians for Freedom of Thought and Discourse**

“The ACTA annual conference in DC last week was very well done and well worth attending. The panelists were superb—some of the best thinkers and doers in the free expression field.”

**John S. Watterson
Charlottesville, VA**

“I’m pleased that your speaker at the Athena Roundtable is John McWhorter. I first saw him on C-SPAN and now read him in the *New York Times*. While I don’t always agree with him, I applaud his strong stand for free speech in academia. . . . Congratulations to ACTA on its twenty-sixth anniversary. Keep up the good fight.”

**Max Eden, Research Fellow
American Enterprise Institute**

“Thanks so much for participating in the higher ed panel at the CERN Summit. I thought you brought some great points to the table that too often go overlooked, and that the panel as a whole was lively and informative for our members.”

Note: In September, President Poliakoff participated on a panel for the American Enterprise Institute’s Conservative Education Reform Network summit.

**Pete Peterson, Dean
Pepperdine School of Public Policy**

“As I told Michael at one of the breaks on Friday, having ACTA on campus was the realization of a dream I’ve had since our first meeting. We, too, look forward to our next steps together in our shared mission to defend the liberal arts as we prepare informed citizens and (dare I say?) leaders.”

**Vivek Mathew, Executive Director
Chesterton House**

“Thank you all SO much for your gracious invitation, hospitality, and brilliant work in putting on such a lovely conference! I am so grateful you all invited me to participate, and the discussions were phenomenal.”

Note: Read more about ACTA’s annual Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference on page 10.

**Adam J. Davis, Director, Lisska Center for Intellectual
Engagement, Denison University**

“We’re still feeling the afterglow of the exciting and impactful debates at Denison this morning. Thank you so much for coming all the way out to Granville to help us pioneer this as part of first-year orientation. We are incredibly excited to see it all come to fruition.”

Note: In August, ACTA and Braver Angels held a series of student debates for Denison University’s freshman orientation program.

**Bob Platt, Member
Cornell Free Speech Alliance**

“Many thanks for all ACTA does to advance quality higher education and informed trustees.”

**William Shropshire, Trustee
Oglethorpe University**

“I recently had a Zoom conference with Anna Sillers and Kyle Beltramini regarding Oglethorpe University and its expenditures relative to those of its peers. I wish to commend their work on the report . . . *The Cost of Excess* is of great help to trustees trying to guide the use of university resources.”

**Robert L. DuPont, M.D., President
Institute for Behavior and Health**

“The leadership role of ACTA in higher education is unique and needed even more today than ever before. There are strong, fundamental values for education and for the youth who are tomorrow’s leaders that are deeply rooted in ACTA. These ACTA values deserve far wider and deeper appreciation in higher education than they now get. The widespread, conscious disregard for the dangerous drug and alcohol use of college youth is more than unfortunate, it is shameful. College gets youth who use less drugs and alcohol than the others in their age group and turns out youth who use far more alcohol and drugs than other youth of the same age.

“I am grateful to have been able to work with you and ACTA. Please give my regards to your wonderful colleagues at ACTA. Your work is more essential today than ever before.”

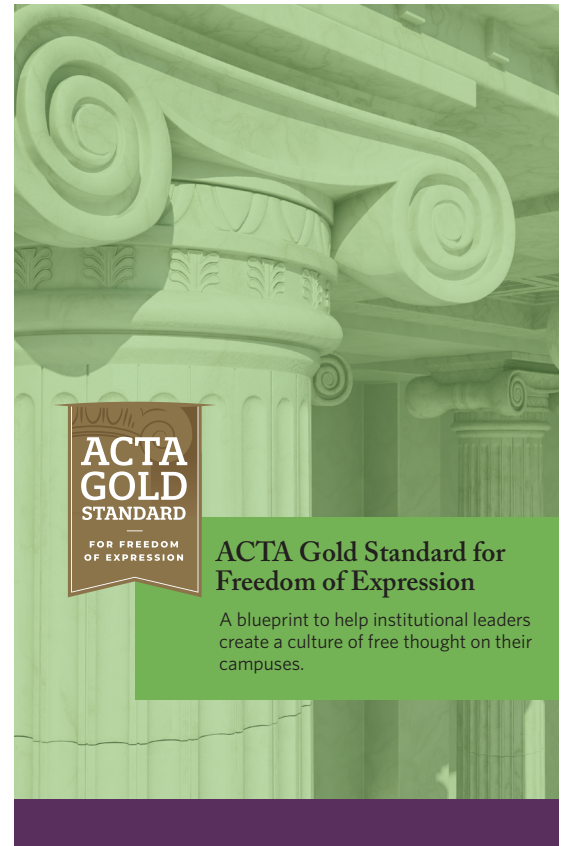
Introducing the ACTA Gold Standard for Freedom of Expression

ACTA has documented the serious and growing threats to free expression in higher education, ranging from the disinvitation of speakers, to bias response teams, to alarming levels of student self-censorship, to discriminatory hiring practices. Now, we are providing our new Gold Standard for Freedom of Expression as a blueprint to help colleges and universities regain and live by the core principles of free thought and academic freedom that form the foundation of liberal education.

This blueprint includes five major areas with which institutions must align to receive the ACTA Gold Standard for Freedom of Expression. Under the first standard, institutions must commit to a culture of free expression by adopting the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression, incorporating a program on free expression in student orientation, and protecting the diversity of political viewpoints by adopting an institutional neutrality policy. The second standard advises universities to foster civil discourse by sponsoring campus debates, encouraging the establishment of student groups that promote free expression, and enforcing consequences that deter disruption of sponsored speakers.

The third standard focuses on cultivating intellectual diversity. It calls on presidents, provosts, and deans to model respect for a broad range of opinions, thereby serving as an example for the rest of the community. Colleges should also support academic centers dedicated to free inquiry and make intellectual

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Can MIT Bring About a Free Speech Turnaround?

On October 12, ACTA's Michael Poliakoff and Steven McGuire published an article in the *Boston Herald* calling on the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to adopt the "Statement on Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom."

The statement is part of a 56-page report released by the Working Group on Free Expression, which MIT created in response to the overwhelming backlash against the institution's controversial decision to disinvite University of Chicago geophysicist Dorian Abbot from delivering the John Carlson Lecture in 2021. The working group's statement asserts that "diversity of thought is an essential ingredient of academic excellence" and that "a commitment

to free expression includes hearing and hosting speakers, including those whose views or opinions may not be shared by many members of the MIT community."

President Poliakoff and Dr. McGuire recommend that "the statement could be improved by declaring unequivocally that university leaders should not take positions on pressing social and political issues on behalf of the institution. There are good models for MIT to follow. The University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill recently set an example when it . . . adopted the Kalven Committee Report, which acknowledges that 'the instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student. The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic.' In

other words, it warns us that presidential virtue signaling is not virtuous. It chills to the marrow the individual who dissents from the institution's professed political position."

ACTA urges MIT's faculty to strengthen and adopt the Statement on Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom, but this is only a first step. Drs. Poliakoff and McGuire write, "If the faculty and university administration want MIT to be a gold standard for free expression, and MIT should, then they need to walk the walk and make the vision of the statement a reality on campus. They should start by ensuring commitment to free expression is a key criterion in their upcoming presidential search." ●



The 2022–2023 What Will They Learn?[®] College Ratings Are In!

On September 28, ACTA launched the 2022–2023 edition of *What Will They Learn?* (WWTL), our signature report on core curriculum requirements. WWTL grades 1,135 U.S. colleges and universities based on their core curricula. In this 14th year of *What Will They Learn?*, ACTA released the ratings first on WhatWillTheyLearn.com and issued the published report in November. ACTA is also emphasizing the WWTL website through both social and traditional media to meet the needs of today’s high school students and parents, many of whom are eager for direction in their college search.

Unlike other college ranking or rating systems, which rely on self-reported or crowdsourced data, WWTL evaluates schools’ general education requirements first-hand. Colleges receive an “A” through “F” grade based on whether all B.A. and B.S. students must take courses in seven essential subject areas: Composition, Literature, (intermediate-level) Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural Science.

This year, ACTA’s research team found a continued decline in general education requirements. Schools too often abandoned core curricular requirements in favor of distribution requirements with abundant options. The shares of “A” and “B” grades have decreased to 1.9% and 29.6% respectively, while “Fs” have increased to 13.4% of all grades, a 10% growth from last year’s proportion.

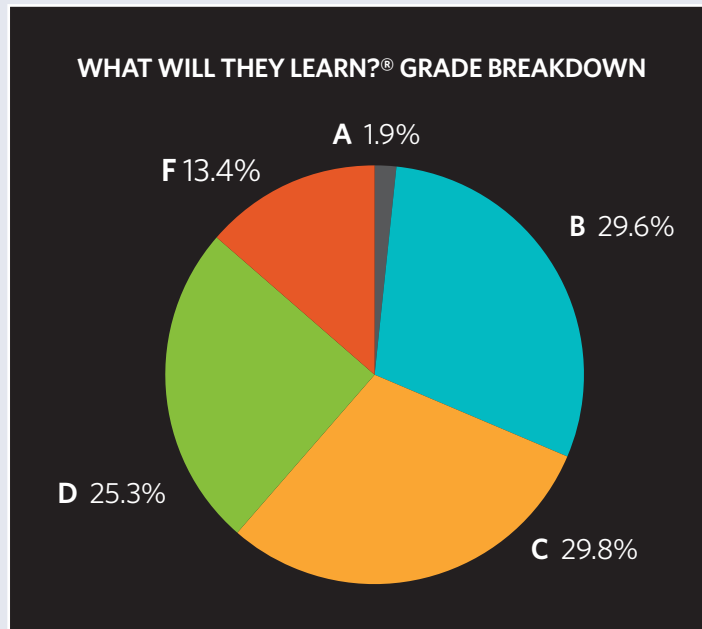
There are 22 “A” schools this year. Although three “A” schools slipped to “Bs”, we are proud to add one new “A”

school, Patrick Henry College in Virginia, which requires all seven subject areas! Core requirements in two subject areas have improved since last year: U.S. Government or History and Economics. Purdue University’s four campuses are the latest public institutions to establish a civics requirement. With the increased importance of STEM, some mathematics requirements have become more rigorous and science requirements have remained steady.

On the other hand, the humanities continue to be neglected. Schools often make foreign language proficiency optional and have weakened composition requirements by implementing first-year seminars and “Writing Across the Disciplines” requirements with minimal expository writing. Yet colleges are jettisoning Literature faster than any other WWTL subject area. In the past year alone, the percentage of schools requiring Literature has declined from 30.6% to 28%, and sadly, three schools lost “A” status because they removed Literature requirements. We will work with these schools

to restore strong core requirements.

Academic excellence often went along with affordability in our findings: 19 of this year’s 22 “A” schools cost less than \$40,000 a year to attend. By contrast, 26 of the 34 institutions charging over \$60,000 in yearly tuition earned a “C” or worse, including 10 “Fs.” To see which colleges and universities provide a high-grade education at an affordable price, visit us on Instagram at [@whatwilltheylearn](https://www.instagram.com/whatwilltheylearn) and on the web at WhatWillTheyLearn.com. To request a complimentary copy of the print report, contact us at wwtl@GoACTA.org.



See how your college rates on WhatWillTheyLearn.com



On October 10, Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse visited the University of Florida (UF) to participate in a moderated forum that was disrupted by student protesters. Senator Sasse was there to answer questions about his candidacy for the position of university president, but the protesters shouted him down before he could deliver remarks and prevented their fellow students from asking questions. Following the forum, which was forced to end early, Senator Sasse was scheduled to meet with university employees in another room, but the protesters gathered there and began shouting. The session had to be moved to an online platform.

The protesters demanded that Senator Sasse decline the president's job because his political views are “discriminatory

and non-representative of our student population.” They called on the board of trustees to pick a candidate who “demonstrates consistent advocacy.” Academics and journalists also joined the fray. *Washington Post* columnist Jennifer Rubin wrote, “Sasse’s vocal opposition to same-sex marriage and support for right-wing Supreme Court judges who disposed of nearly 50 years of abortion precedent naturally don’t sit well in a diverse university setting.” She implied that Senator Sasse may not be able to meet the “intellectual rigor of a major university.”

Steven McGuire, ACTA's Paul & Karen Levy Fellow in Campus Freedom, recently published an article in *The Hill*, entitled, “Backlash to Ben Sasse’s candidacy to lead the University of Florida highlights anti-conservative bias on

campus.” He wrote, “Critics of Sen. Ben Sasse’s (R-Neb.) bid to become president of the University of Florida (UF) offer another sorry example of academia hurting itself for the sake of petty political opposition. Questions about the selection process and Sasse’s qualifications are fair game. Complaining that his conservative views are unwelcome on campus highlights the political bias that pervades our universities and threatens to erode public support for them.”

He continued, “The most important kind of diversity at a university is diversity of thought. Senator Sasse’s liberal critics are admitting they do not want any part of it.” ACTA calls on all public university administrations to fulfill their duty to maintain institutional neutrality. ●

Gold Standard, *continued from 3*

diversity a stated goal in faculty hiring. To meet the fourth standard, colleges and universities should disband bias response teams and ensure that Title IX and other disciplinary procedures do not infringe on free expression. The fifth standard zeroes in on college governance. It asks institutions to incorporate explicit policies on free expression in governance bylaws; include free expression as a criterion for presidential searches; and to require training on free expression and viewpoint diversity for administrative staff.

ACTA is offering consultations and presentations for trustees and other higher education leaders on the principles behind the Gold Standard and best practices for meeting its criteria. We have also released the *Campus Freedom Toolkit*, a useful resource that combines in one document all the important reports, classic and contemporary, on the principles of campus free expression—such as the Kalven Committee Report, Chicago Principles, and the C. Vann Woodward Report. We also summarize several ACTA resources that can help college leaders understand the theoretical foundation of the five standards and steps for implementation.

The Gold Standard for Freedom of Expression is part of ACTA's multi-pronged Campus Freedom Initiative, funded by a generous gift from the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation. ●



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Celebrating Diversity Done Right (cont'd)



Doug Sprei, April Lawson Kornfield of Braver Angels, Manu Meel of BridgeUSA, Karrin Taylor Robson, founder of the Regents' Cup, and Professor Deondra Rose of Duke University discuss how civil discourse can change the culture on campus.

principled stand against discrimination in faculty hiring and student admissions—questioned this idea. He remarked that the only factor colleges should weigh when considering new hires is academic ability. “When you take into account lots of nonacademic factors, it enables a large, expensive bureaucracy, and it also enables the bureaucracy to play games like picking people that they want and obfuscating what they’re actually doing.” Dr. Loury strongly asserted that the academic cost of racial preferences is too high. “It’s not a zero-one issue. . . . You would have diversity if you simply admitted without racial preferences, you just wouldn’t have population parity. . . . At what cost are we purchasing 8% or 10% representation of African Americans? There’s a standard deviation difference in the SAT score presented by students whom we’re admitting across racial groups, so I would say at considerable costs.”

Professor Khalid advocated taking the huge sum spent on DEI administration and directing it toward the classroom. While acknowledging the support among many faculty for DEI initiatives, she argued that tenured professors must take the lead to oppose illiberal diversity training. Addressing inequality should occur in the classroom through complex and nuanced discussions that welcome

disagreement. Mr. Chisholm called on trustees to request detailed data from university leaders on DEI programs and to sit in on diversity trainings. He also encouraged alumni in the audience to form advocacy groups to urge their institutions to establish protections for free speech.

Doug Sprei, ACTA’s vice president of multimedia & campus partnerships, asked each member of the second panel to give remarks on the following debate resolution: “Resolved: Civil society is in decline and there’s not a damn thing that colleges and universities can do about it.” Panelist **Deondra Rose**, Kevin D. Gorter Associate Professor of Public Policy at Duke University, argued that there is much more that institutions can do to promote democratic engagement. Students feel they cannot express their true views in class while others shut down opinions they do not like. Professors must remedy this by setting expectations for civil discussion during the very first class. “In this space, we’re exploring. We’re asking questions. You don’t have to have the right answer. I’m actually not looking for the right answer right now.”

Karrin Taylor Robson, former member of the Arizona Board of Regents, said the state of civil discourse on campus is like a patient brought to the ER, but the

prognosis is good. She cited the success of the Regents’ Cup, an annual debate competition between Arizona’s three public universities that trains students to engage in the civil, free exchange of ideas. The Regents’ Cup has generated enormous support from the administration, faculty, students, and state legislators. Institutions across the country are seeking to reproduce the event.

Manu Meel, CEO of the student group BridgeUSA, and **April Lawson Kornfield**, managing director of debates and public discourse at Braver Angels, highlighted how the structure of ACTA/Braver Angels debates enables students to share their personal story and release their passion without resorting to personal attacks. Ms. Kornfield said, “We ask that you say what you actually believe, but that’s not just telling me your experience or the facts you know. It’s also telling me what you’re not sure about,” which is incredibly disarming for debate opponents. Mr. Meel shared, “Civil discourse, listening, empathy . . . help you open your mind, but most importantly, it is a way to exercise your moral courage. That’s what young people are looking for. . . . We’re articulating [civil discourse] as a tool for the pioneers of tomorrow to build a more hopeful tomorrow.” ●

Professor John H. McWhorter Accepts Philip Merrill Award

Following the ATHENA Roundtable, over 190 guests came together to honor Columbia University Professor John McWhorter with the 17th annual Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. **Janice Rogers Brown**, ACTA board member and former United States circuit judge, opened the ceremony. Tribute-givers **Glenn Loury**, **Steven Pinker**, and **Roosevelt Montás** praised Professor McWhorter's illuminating scholarship; his dynamic teaching ability and advancement of open deliberation in the college classroom; and his fearless indictment of the "bias narrative." Dr. Loury said, "Negative aspects of black life are attributed almost entirely to the nation's history of racial oppression . . .

That's one story you could tell." But through his books and social commentary, Professor McWhorter, like the boy who pointed out that the emperor had no clothes, has put an end to the "willful blindness to reality on issues of race and social justice that are characteristic of our time. . . . It is now up to those of us who are committed to an honest engagement with this age-old American dilemma of race and social justice to follow his lead."

Catherine Merrill, CEO and owner of Washingtonian Media and daughter of the late Philip Merrill, presented Professor McWhorter with a replica of an early American fire bucket inscribed with the Rosetta Stone, crafted by artisan Steven Laliouff. In his acceptance speech, Professor McWhorter remarked, "Our prob-

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Presentation of Philip Merrill Award



Professor John H. McWhorter



Professor McWhorter and President Michael Poliakkoff



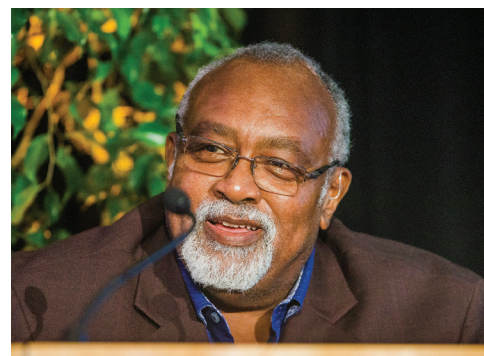
The Honorable Janice Rogers Brown



Catherine Merrill



Professor Steven Pinker



Professor Glenn Loury

ACTA Honors Professor Erec Smith as a Hero of Intellectual Freedom

Following our ATHENA Roundtable panels, we honored Erec Smith, associate professor of rhetoric and composition at York College of Pennsylvania, as an ACTA Hero of Intellectual Freedom. Professor Smith has critiqued critical race theory for its promotion of identity politics and victimization. As Steven McGuire, ACTA's Paul & Karen Levy Fellow in Campus Freedom, explained when introducing Dr. Smith, "Erec Smith confronted this ideology head on, when, on Tuesday, March 19, 2019 . . . he sent a message to a professional listserv responding to a keynote address at a recent academic conference in his field. Erec suggested that the talk was a kind of performative politics that wouldn't effect real change, and he took issue with the author's claim that teaching standardized English to students of color is an act of white supremacy. The response was abrupt. A colleague accused Erec of being 'beyond Stockholm syndrome' and engaging in 'performative harm' . . . How did Erec respond? He refocused his efforts . . . he saw a challenge, a threat to freedom and diversity of thought, and he rose to meet it."

In his award acceptance speech, Dr. Smith remarked, "There is a group of people that I need to thank the most: my haters. I wouldn't be here without them. None of this would be happening. You wouldn't know my name." He explained that the can-



Erec Smith accepts the Hero of Intellectual Freedom award. ACTA honored Professor Smith with a print of the Athenian orator Demosthenes.

celation attempt inspired him to write two books on anti-racism and to create Free Black Thought, "an organization that tries to showcase viewpoint diversity within black America—the black academics, writers, artists, podcast hosts. We are not a monolith. That seems obvious to me. It's probably obvious to many of you, but it's not obvious to enough people."

Through Free Black Thought and another organization called EmpowerED Pathways, Professor Smith is providing an alternative to the current DEI framework that trades blame and victimhood for liberal values, self-awareness, and empowerment theory. This new framework eschews "going into a situation with ready-made ideas, projecting them on the people you don't know based on how they look." In closing, he said, "I tell my students as often as possible, they're probably sick of it, 'do not be afraid of conflict, run toward it.' It can cause innovation. It can make you grow in ways you never thought possible. It can enhance your ability to adapt to rough situations, and it can make you anti-fragile. And what I mean is that you don't fortify yourself, you make yourself better. The crisis makes you better."

Dr. McGuire presented Professor Smith with a portrait of the ancient Athenian orator Demosthenes and invited him to our prestigious group of Heroes of Intellectual Freedom. ●

Philip Merrill Award, *continued from 7*

lem is that there's a certain contingent that are having disproportionate influence in not only universities, but thinking culture today, who believe that we must focus on something very specific: battling differentials of power, especially ones that involve white people in power, and that if you are not battling differentials in power, then you should not be allowed to speak."

He continued, "That's not an insane proposition. After all, differentials in power and the abuses that come from it have created a great deal of horror in the history of the human species. . . . The issue is less that formal proposition and how it could potentially be defended by an intelligent person than how it comes out in

real life, which is a rather more transparent proposition: that something you call 'whiteness,' whatever that is, must be at least questioned and optimally eliminated. And that . . . a black person can never be wrong and must never be seriously challenged."

Professor McWhorter explained that this ideology represents "creeping anti-intellectualism" and is ultimately condescending. He said, "What about the gray zones? Complexity? No. Nuance? No. That's working too hard. It's rather white. Instead, what's important is expressing your feelings." Offering as an example the move by many institutions to eliminate the SAT, he said, "The idea is we get rid of

the SAT because black kids aren't as good at it as other people . . . because the test is racist. . . . What you're saying is that it's wrong to submit a black person to a test of abstract cognitive skill. Now, if it's wrong to submit a black person to a test of abstract cognitive skill, what [are] you kind of close to saying?"

In closing, he remarked, "We must battle this, or we will not recognize our intellectual culture in as little as 10 years." We must be "ready to march on and fight this slow but necessary fight against something perfectly understandable but absolutely poisonous to our having an American thinking culture that deserves the name." ●



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

End Discrimination in College Admissions

On September 29, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff and Steven McGuire, our Paul & Karen Levy Fellow in Campus Freedom, published “Stop using race to rig college admissions” in the *Washington Examiner*. With the Supreme Court now deciding *Students for Fair Admissions v. President & Fellows of Harvard*, Dr. Poliakoff and Dr. McGuire evaluated the history of anti-Asian discrimination at elite universities.

They wrote, “In 1985, the *New York Times* recounted what Princeton University professor Uwe Reinhardt witnessed at a graduate school admissions committee: ‘[W]e came to a clearly qualified Asian-American student . . . and one committee member said, “We have enough of them.” And someone else turned to me and said, “You have to admit, there are a lot.”’”

Discrimination continues today. Harvard’s own data show that an Asian American student in the top decile of the university’s “academic index” has a 12.7% chance of admission, while an African American applicant has a 56.1% chance. The authors write, “There are better methods for building a diverse

student body than privileging race. Even a colorblind admission and scholarship program based solely on socioeconomic status would be fairer, and it would inevitably bring a diverse group of students to the university. . . . Surely, the time has come to move forward to a system based on merit and fairness, not the ugly, discriminatory practices of the past.”

ACTA President Calls Out Tuition Increases

In his September 30 *Forbes* column, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff exposed the root of the student debt crisis: tuition increases. Dr. Poliakoff questioned the dubious claim among some education leaders that tuition increases are, paradoxically, a public good because they ultimately support scholarships for disadvantaged students.

“To what extent is tuition revenue actually being used to widen access for disadvantaged students?”, Dr. Poliakoff asked. “Hypothetically, if all funds from higher tuition were passed on to lower-income students, the net price would essentially stay the same.” But ACTA has found that the net price paid by students who attend a four-year public institution

and receive any type of government or institutional scholarship aid has grown by 12% in the last 10 years. “The higher education Robin Hood does an ineffective job of redistributing tuition revenue. And it must not be forgotten that the burden of tuition increases . . . falls most heavily on middle class families, who must pay all or most of the ‘sticker price’ of tuition.”

Moreover, while the average amount that public colleges spend on scholarships per student has increased by just 16% in the past 10 years, spending on administrative expenses has grown by 18%, and spending on student services has risen 21%. In 2020, the University of California–Berkeley spent \$34 million on its Division of Equity & Inclusion, which is classified as a student services expenditure. Colleges and universities could direct that money toward scholarships and fellowships for disadvantaged students.

If institutions do not take action, such as establishing tuition freezes as Purdue University has done, “The upward spiral of spending and tuition increases will inflict financial damage on everyone . . . and Robin Hood is unlikely to be willing to fix that.” ●

Principles Over Politics: Emma Camp Defends Free Speech



ACTA seeks to spotlight students who bravely expose restrictions on free speech and defend open inquiry. Emma Camp, who graduated from the University of Virginia (UVA) this year, drew national attention when her article, “I Came to College Eager to Debate. I Found Self-Censorship Instead,” was published in the *New York Times* (NYT) in March. She wrote, “I went to college to learn from professors and peers. I welcomed an environment that champions intellectual diversity and rigorous disagreement. Instead, my college experience has been defined by strict ideological conformity. Students of all political persuasions hold back—in class discussions, in friendly conversations, on social media—from saying what we really think. Even as a liberal who has attended abortion rights demonstrations and written about standing up to racism, I sometimes feel afraid to fully speak my mind.”

(continued on 10)

2022 Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference

On September 23, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni's Fund for Academic Renewal hosted our annual Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference in partnership with Pepperdine University's School of Public Policy (SPP) in Malibu, California. The conference brought together 26 faculty members, leaders of outstanding campus programs, for discussions about the opportunities to enhance intellectual diversity and enable deep learning.

Campus centers earn designation as an "Oasis of Excellence" by promoting rigorous academic study, a strong liberal arts curriculum, and broad viewpoint diversity at colleges and universities. These faculty-led, donor-supported programs play a vital role in restoring the promise of higher education. The growing Oases of Excellence network currently includes 80 campus programs.

At the conference, faculty leaders participated in panel discussions on several key topics, including engaging students in civil discourse, opportunities for specialized graduate programs, ways to cultivate connections with alumni, and ensuring

that students from a range of disciplines have access to a vibrant liberal arts education. This year's conference gathered both new and longtime ACTA faculty friends. Paul Carrese, founding director of Arizona State University's School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership (SCETL), returned as a panelist to discuss SCETL's vision and success. Faculty from institutions across California—including Thomas Aquinas College, Biola University, and Stanford University—joined us for the first time.

In a closing address, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff remarked that the *telos* of colleges and universities must be educating students to take up the rigorous pursuit of truth. Higher education has its "base cut out from under it" when it fails to provide a solid liberal arts foundation upon which to build more specialized programs.

Dr. Douglas Henry, dean of Baylor University's Honors College, delivered a keynote speech at the dinner following the panels. He started with the ABCs of the state of higher education: "A is for



FAR
FUND FOR ACADEMIC RENEWAL

abyss. B is for brink or broken. C is for collapse and crisis." But he also offered hope that the study of the liberal arts can renew our colleges and universities. He remarked, "Liberal education always and ever addresses itself to the human person, to the singular human being whose intellectual and spiritual liberation is at stake."

After the conference, Shilo Brooks, assistant director of the James Madison Program at Princeton University, commented, "I am a big ACTA fan, and this conference only reaffirmed my affection." When asked about the most valuable takeaway from the event, Siri Terjesen, associate dean for research and external relations at Florida Atlantic University's College of Business, said, "There are others in academia who are defending the liberal arts, all in different ways. We can learn from and with one another and we are not attempting our work alone." ●

Emma Camp, *continued from 9*

After her piece was published, the social media mob mobilized, accusing her of being a white nationalist. *NYT* journalist and author of the ahistorical and widely refuted 1619 Project Nikole Hannah Jones sarcastically Tweeted that Ms. Camp's observation of self-censorship could not be sincere. The responses confirm Ms. Camp's claim: "Backlash for unpopular opinions is so commonplace that many students have stopped voicing them."

Ms. Camp recently joined our Higher Ed Now podcast to discuss her experience. She shared, "I think this kind of trend where politics are taking precedence over principles is really, really destructive to our ability to not only just get along with each other but also understand each other. Personally, I don't identify as right-wing, but I'm called right-wing all the time because I defend right-wing people's ability to say things that they think are true. . . . the fact that to defend something on principle is taken as a sign that you secretly believe the person you're defending is ultimately destructive."

Ms. Camp urged institutions to prioritize intellectual diversity. She commented, "I think if we had more professors and more administrators who believed in different things, we wouldn't have this problem." Speaking about university leaders, she said, "Fundamentally, they need to stop caving to mobs, because how often so many of these . . . cancellation mobs are successful is [because] university administrations freak out." Instead, presidents and administrators must resolve, "No, we're not going to punish this student because they said something you don't like. We're not going to fire this professor. We're not going to cancel this speaker. Deal with it. We live in a liberal society."

Listen to the full discussion on our Higher Ed Now podcast. ●

Karrin Taylor Robson Joins ACTA's Board

ACTA welcomes Karrin Taylor Robson to our Board of Directors. Ms. Robson is a highly respected Arizona business leader, a former Arizona gubernatorial candidate, and an advocate for higher education reform.

Ms. Robson served on the Arizona Board of Regents from 2017 to 2020. For her outstanding work there to advance civic education and the free exchange of ideas, ACTA honored her with the Jerry L. Martin Prize for Excellence in College Trusteeship at our 2021 25th Anniversary Celebration. During her service on the board, she created the Regents' Cup, a debate competition between Arizona State University's three campuses that fosters vibrant democratic engagement. 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."

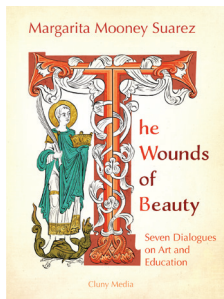
Ms. Robson is the founder and president of Arizona Strategies, a premier land use strategy firm. She serves as the chair of the Joe Foss Institute, a board officer of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, and a board member of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and InvisionAZ. In addition, she is a member of the Civic Leaders Group for the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force.

We will benefit from her counsel as we work to protect academic freedom, promote academic excellence, and advance accountability in American higher education. ●



A Review of *The Wounds of Beauty: Seven Dialogues on Art and Education* by Margarita Mooney Suarez

by Bradley Jackson, ACTA Vice President of Policy



Margarita Mooney Suarez, associate professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, has recently published an excellent set of conversations with educators on the topic of beauty in the liberal arts. This book is a follow-up to Professor Mooney Suarez's previous book, *The Love of Learning: Seven Dialogues on the Liberal Arts*, which also includes wide-ranging interviews regarding the enduring importance of the liberal arts and what they can offer students today. In this follow-up work, Professor Mooney Suarez and her interlocutors focus their attention on the classical triad of beauty, goodness, and truth.

Education, we learn in these conversations, is about much more than simply learning how to code a website or engineer a better washing machine, as useful as such activities may be. Instead, we turn to education, and most especially to higher education, to help us to grow and to enrich our lives. To use the

Aristotelian idiom to which this book often recurs, we hope that by becoming educated, we may actualize our latent potential and become more fully human. Such a point of view can be present in many fields, and not only in those fields that have retained the name of "the humanities," as we can learn from the first interview in this volume, with Peter Brown of Princeton University. This interview, "Beauty, Mathematics, and the Cosmos in Late Antiquity," discusses thoughts on the beautiful from thinkers such as Plato, Plotinus, and Augustine, reminding us that aesthetics bears a close relationship to metaphysics, religion, and the quest for knowledge of the world. Other interviews discuss topics as various as music, science, happiness, and the beauty of activities such as cheesemaking (the latter in a charming interview with Sister Noella Marcellino, O.S.B.). Again and again, the conversations display how the love of learning can deepen and enrich our lives. This book is highly recommended to anyone interested in aesthetic education and its relationship to human flourishing, particularly from a Catholic perspective. ●



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Dear ACTA Friend,

This has been a remarkable year for ACTA, in which we launched urgently needed initiatives. Thanks to the foundations and individuals who stand with us, ACTA can operate at full throttle.

We created the ACTA Gold Standard for Freedom of Expression and the Campus Freedom Toolkit, giving clear guidance on the steps colleges must take to vouchsafe a culture of free thought and expression. That means making expectations for unfettered discourse crystal clear to faculty and students, hiring administrators committed to free speech, and eliminating speech codes and procedures that chill free inquiry. We are leading higher education to a proper role in our free society.

Our Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR) program helps higher education philanthropists make targeted gifts that reflect their values. FAR has now advised donors on \$188 million in gifts to higher education, and its customized guidance helps ensure respect for donor intent.

Our College Debates and Discourse Program has now conducted more than 100 campus and classroom debates, engaging over 5,000 students. It reforms campus culture by habituating students to civil, open-minded discourse on even the most controversial topics of our times. In June, the John Templeton Foundation awarded \$1.26 million to support a research project that will help us make its procedures even more effective.

We expanded our outreach to high schools, engaging with over 16,500 teachers, administrators, and families, and introducing them to our college core curriculum survey What Will They Learn?. We help college-bound students find campuses that are academically serious and intellectually open, places where their skills and character can grow. We reached 95,000 parents, students, and high school counselors through direct email outreach.

These are just highlights of 2022. We appreciate your sustaining generosity. Without you, our important work would not be possible. Thank you!

Wishing you a joyous holiday, President Michael Poliakoff

