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Statement by ACTA President Michael Poliakoff

March 11, 2025

For over 30 years, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) has worked with governing boards, administrators, alumni, and policymakers to ensure that America’s colleges and universities are responsive to the needs of students, parents, and taxpayers. We have hosted dozens of trainings for public governing boards and assisted them in their roles as active, engaged fiduciaries by reviewing their institutions’ spending habits, student outcomes, and pricing models and benchmarking them against their peers. This vital work of ensuring public accountability is now being threatened by a series of hastily considered cuts to essential data collection programs at the Department of Education.

We firmly believe that the Department of Education has a bloated bureaucracy and contains many programs that do not represent the interests and needs of the American people. But the speed at which the administration is slashing the department’s programs, contracts, and annual surveys is causing confusion and leaves many with questions about how—or even if—this information will continue to be collected. Without these services, ACTA predicts that the college spending crisis will worsen, as colleges and universities will be empowered to spend public funds wantonly without any effective oversight, transparency, or accountability. The public, moreover, will be left without the information it needs about higher education performance, thereby delighting bad actors with the prospect of diminished accountability.

Among the reported \$900 million in cuts to the Institute of Education Sciences are several contracts that directly and indirectly support the National Center for Education Statistics, home to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. This congressionally mandated program remains the largest publicly available source of higher education data and is used by the department—including in the student-focused College Scorecard and College Navigator—as well as by thousands of private researchers. While we agree that many functions and services the Department of Education provides can be relocated or returned to the states, and welcome efforts to reduce the regulatory burden the department places on well-performing institutions, ACTA cannot support any disruption to its data collection programs and the transparency on which accountability depends.

Michael B. Poliakoff
President

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