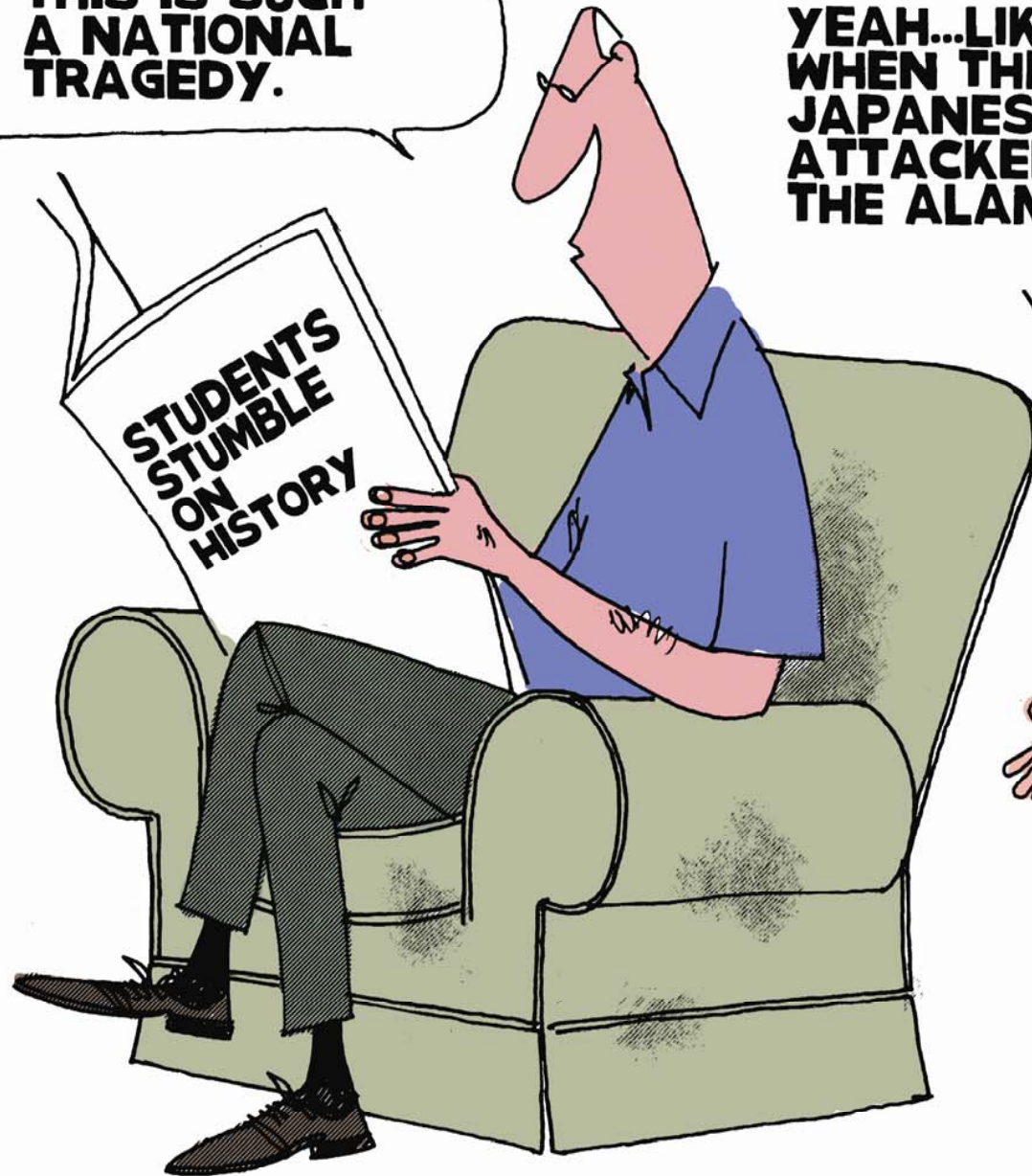


**THIS IS SUCH
A NATIONAL
TRAGEDY.**



**YEAH...LIKE
WHEN THE
JAPANESE
ATTACKED
THE ALAMO.**

THE CORE MATTERS

The Heart of Academic Excellence

ATHENA Roundtable

November 4, 2011

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.

Vice President of Policy, American Council of Trustees and Alumni



ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

Some Guiding Questions

- How Does an Institution Encourage Academic Success (or not)?
- What Is a Meaningful College Degree?
- What Are the Wisdom, Knowledge, and Skills Students Should Seek?
- Why Do the Liberal Arts Matter?

National Perspective: The View Of Employers

- 23.9% find graduates overall preparation “excellent.”
- 64.5% say “adequate.”
- 26.2% find their writing skills “deficient”

Linda Barrington and Jill Casner-Lotto, *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce* (The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society for Human Resource Management, 2006)



Bureau of Labor Statistics Findings

- Individuals born from 1957 to 1964 held an average of **11 jobs** from age 18 to age 44.
- ... 2.6 while ages 28 to 32.
- ...**2.4 jobs while ages 33 to 38 and 2.0 jobs ages 39 to 44.**
- Among jobs started by **39- to 44-year-olds, 33 percent ended in less than a year**, and 68 percent ended in fewer than 5 years.

<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf>

Faculty Research on Student Learning

Two Years:

45% showed
Minimal Improvement



Four Years:

36% showed
Minimal
Improvement

Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift. Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011)

Forty-five percent of students did not demonstrate any significant improvement in learning, as measured by CLA (=Collegiate Learning Assessment) performance, during their first two years of college.

Considering all four years of college, we find that 36 percent of students did not demonstrate any significant improvement in learning, as measured by CLA performance.

Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, Esther Cho, *Improving Undergraduate Learning: Findings and Policy Recommendations from the SSRC-CLA Longitudinal Project* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2011)

http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7Bd06178be-3823-e011-ade01cc477ec84%7D.pdf

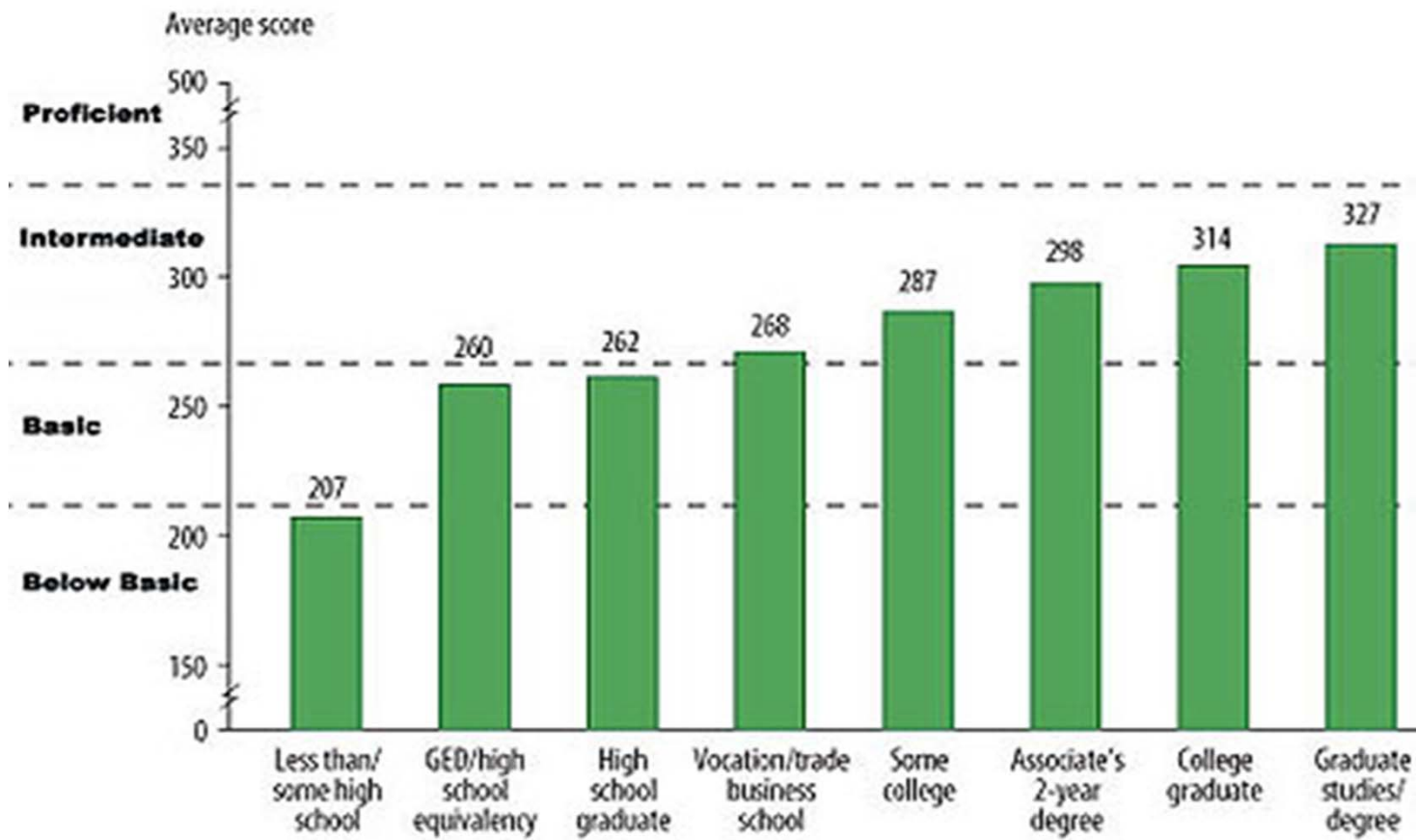
Does This Have Anything to Do With Us?

“There is more variation within institutions than across institutions.

... high- and low-performing students can be found at each institution and within each level of selectivity.”

Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, Esther Cho, *Improving Undergraduate Learning: Findings and Policy Recommendations from the SSRC-CLA Longitudinal Project* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2011) http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7Bd06178be-3823-e011-ade0-001cc477ec84%7D.pdf

National Assessment of Adult Literacy



“What Do We (They) Mean By Proficient

Proficient indicates skills necessary to perform more complex and challenging literacy activities.

Score ranges for *Proficient*:

Prose: 340–500

Document: 335–500

Quantitative: 350–500

- reading lengthy, complex, abstract prose texts as well as synthesizing information and making complex inferences
- integrating, synthesizing, and analyzing multiple pieces of information located in complex documents
- locating more abstract quantitative information and using it to solve multistep problems when the arithmetic operations are not easily inferred and the problems are more complex
- comparing viewpoints in two editorials
- interpreting a table about blood pressure, age, and physical activity
- computing and comparing the cost per ounce of food items



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NSSE 2010 and Student Learning

Hours spent preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)

	First-Year Students	Seniors
1-5 Hours	14%	15%
6-10 Hours	24%	24%
11-15 Hours	22%	20%
16-20 Hours	18%	17%
21-25 Hours	10%	10%

WHAT will they LEARN?

A guide to what college rankings don't tell you.

[RECEIVE UPDATES »](#)
[DONATE](#)
[DEAN'S LETTER](#)
[FAQ](#)
[COMPARE SCHOOLS](#)
[RATING CRITERIA](#)
["A" LIST](#)
[\\$30,000+ CLUB](#)
[ABOUT US](#)
[IN THE NEWS](#)


VT
NH
MA
RI
CT
NJ
DE
MD
DC

The search for the right college can be overwhelming. So many guides, so many rankings. There is one thing none of them will tell you: which universities are making sure their students learn what they need to know.

This free resource does just that, focusing on seven key areas of knowledge. It's designed to help you decide whether the colleges you're considering prepare their graduates to succeed after graduation.

To locate a school, choose a state from the map on the left or use the form below.

FIND A SCHOOL

[Advanced Search](#) | [View All Schools](#)

SEE WHICH COLLEGES REQUIRE THESE CORE SUBJECTS



COMPOSITION



LITERATURE



FOREIGN LANGUAGE



U.S. HISTORY



ECONOMICS



MATHEMATICS



SCIENCE

ACTA'S Study of the Core Curriculum, What Will They Learn?™

1007 Colleges and Universities:

5.1% Require an Introduction to Economics

20 % Require Foundational Study of American History
or Government

15.4% Require Intermediate Level Foreign Language

34.2% *Do Not* Require College-Level Mathematics

16.6% *Do Not* Require English Composition

National Perspectives on Historical Illiteracy

ACTA, Losing America's Memory (February 2000)

*Survey of 556 college seniors at the Top 25 National Universities
and the Top 25 National Liberal Arts Colleges.*

- Beavis and Butthead 99%
- Snoop Doggy Dog 98%
- George Washington as general at Yorktown 34%
- James Madison as Father of the Constitution 23%
- Abraham Lincoln as author of the words: "Government of the people, by the people, for the people" 22%

*CSRA: The Center for Survey
Research and Analysis at the
University of Connecticut
December 1999*



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Richard Arum to Trustees:

“Take a hard look at your general education requirements. Does your institution have meaningful core requirements for graduation that ensure a rigorous education regardless of major? Are students pushed to read and write at a college level?...

Institutions that fail to set meaningful expectations, a rigorous curriculum and high standards for their students are actively contributing to the degradation of teaching and learning. **They are putting these students and our country’s future at risk.”**

<http://www.goacta.org/press/PressReleases/2011PressReleases/RichardArumLetter.pdf>

Is ACTA Too Demanding?

- 19 “A” grades (out of 1007)
- 87 “F” grades
- 61% “C” or below

Expository Writing?

Freshmen Seminars/Lower Division Writing Courses

- Emerging Diseases (Biology)
- Beyond Petroleum as Fuel (Chemistry)
- The Art of Detection (English)
- Detective Fiction (English)
- Food in World History (History)
- Mafia Representations (Italian)

A Freshman Writing Class

- FR SEM: This reading, writing, and discussion-intensive seminar is designed to allow students to explore the world of Sherlock Holmes (SH), Conan **Doyles** (sic) great detective. We will examine the genesis of **Daoyle** (sic) creation, read extensively from the stories, and give emphasis to their translation into visual media. We will explore the very early use of forensic techniques in SH and in **Vistorian** (sic) England, as well as explore the evolution of forensic detection as it is used by SH's literary descendants. This course satisfies the Lower-Division Writing Requirement.

Expository Writing

**“What Should Colleges Teach,” by Stanley Fish
New York Times, August 24, 2009**

“A few years ago, when I was grading papers for a graduate literature course, I became alarmed at the inability of my students to write a clean English sentence. They could manage for about six words and then, almost invariably, the syntax (and everything else) fell apart.

As I learned more about the world of composition studies, I came to the conclusion that **unless writing courses focus exclusively on writing they are a sham, and I advised administrators to insist that all courses listed as courses in composition teach grammar and rhetoric and nothing else.”**

A Non-Core “Distributional” Curriculum

GE-4A (History and Culture of the European Tradition)

- American History to 1877 (seven sections)
- Art History I
- Jazz
- Philosophic History of American Environmentalism
- History of Western Music

Turning the Tide

“The University of the Sciences and Arts of Oklahoma **eschews the menu approach to general education**, in which students choose from many courses that have been pieced together into broad categories. Instead, **all USAO students take the same sequence of courses, building a common experience that binds together current students, faculty, and alumni. This common set of courses is structured to lead students through a logical sequence of learning.**”

TUITION & FEES (IN STATE):\$3,744 annually

TUITION & FEES (OUT OF STATE):\$8,904 annually





Soprano Margaret Singer, an alum of USAO who came in from Paris today to join in homecoming. She is pinned by USAO's Shayna Woidke, the designer.

Turning the Tide

“We strive for excellence in our higher education system, and I am pleased that our colleges and universities fared particularly well in ACTA's What Will They Learn? college guide. **The University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, one of only 19 institutions to receive an A, is a fine example of that effort.** As we get ready to launch Complete College America, under the Governor's leadership, we will continue to make the quality education of our students a top priority.”

Oklahoma Secretary of Education Phyllis Hudecki

Turning the Tide

MA 10 Mathematics for Liberal Arts (Fairfield University)

This course presents major mathematical concepts in an historical and cultural setting . Topics include geometry, set theory, logic, and *differential and integral calculus*. Students explore the interplay between mathematics, philosophy, and the arts in addition to the more traditional relationship between mathematics and the physical sciences. *The course treats mathematics as an art for its aesthetic beauty and as a science...*

Turning the Tide

Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D.

President and CEO of the United Negro College Fund

“The ACTA review’s finding that historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)‘demonstrate overall stronger general education requirements than other public and private institutions’ confirms the important role these universities continue to play in American higher education.

We are also gratified by the overwhelming public support reported by the Roper survey for giving all students the rigorous education they need and that the nation needs them to have. The challenge now is for our colleges to set their sights higher: to give their students not just a good education, but a great education.”

Turning the Tide

The Washington Post

Education Review

Eight ways to get higher education into shape

By Daniel de Vise

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sunday, February 20, 2011

“There's broad agreement that the general education system is flawed, and some presidents are calling for stronger core requirements. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni in Washington has led the campaign; its 2010 report What Will They Learn? gives Harvard a D and Yale an F for failing to require such basic subjects as mathematics and U.S. history.”

Turning the Tide

**RESTORE THE
CORE!**

Society for the College
of William and Mary

Growing Impact of WWTL

- Over 160,000 visits to WWTL, over 120,000 unique visits
 - 11/1/2011: over **14,000** visits
- Op-Eds by Kathleen Parker in 198 newspapers
- Op-Ed by William McGurn
- Coverage in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*
- ... and 37 additional newspapers
- A total circulation reaching over 14,750,000
- Working with the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)
- Working with the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities

With thanks to ACTA's friends and supporters.



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