




Shaping the **Future** of Higher Education

2012 Annual Report



**ACTA**  
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF  
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

A person with a backpack is walking across a bridge, looking down at a device in their hands. The bridge has a metal railing. The background is a bright sky with clouds.

*Congratulations on the important work  
you are doing. ... What you are fighting for  
has never been more important.*

– Lawrence Summers, professor  
and former president, Harvard University

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is an independent, non-profit organization committed to academic freedom, excellence, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Founded in 1995, ACTA is the only national organization dedicated to working with alumni, donors, trustees, and education leaders across the United States to support liberal arts education, uphold high academic standards, safeguard the free exchange of ideas on campus, and ensure that the next generation receives an intellectually rich, high-quality education at an affordable price. Our network consists of alumni and trustees from more than 1,100 colleges and universities, including over 14,000 current board members. Our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, reaches nearly 13,000 readers.

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ACTA working for you: Anne D. Neal, Michael Poliakoff, Jacquie Pfeffer Merrill, Lauri Kempson, Tom Bako, Jasmine Wolfe, Daniel Burnett, Courtney Michaluk, William Gonch, Iris Hall, Greg Lewin, and Armand Alacbay.

# Things are different in academia these days.

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Thanks to the support of friends far and wide, ACTA is shaping the future of higher education. Whether it's restoring a core curriculum, demanding affordability, or insisting on informed stewardship, ACTA is re-focusing the American academy on things that matter.

In the last year—as never before—Americans have concentrated on issues of educational excellence, cost-effectiveness and responsible board governance. These have long been ACTA's signature issues, and ACTA has taken center stage in recent policy debates. Trustees, the media, and policymakers—at the state and federal level—have turned to ACTA because of our long-standing record of leadership.

Thanks to your support:

- Colleges are changing their core curricula for the better, adding requirements in U.S. history, economics, and other subjects.
- Major universities are canceling tuition increases—something they have not done in decades.
- Policymakers at the highest level are calling for accreditation reform—adopting ACTA's reform agenda as never before.
- Trustees are vigorously embracing their legal responsibility for the academic and financial health of academic institutions, after years of failure.
- The mainstream media is echoing ACTA's call for engaged board leadership as the only way to set academic priorities and to ensure quality and cost control.

Like you, ACTA believes that strong colleges and universities, dedicated to the pursuit of truth, are essential to our democratic society. We believe students have a right to a coherent

curriculum that introduces them to the great thinkers of our world and to a campus atmosphere of critical inquiry and free and open debate. We believe the breakdown in curriculum and instruction at our universities has contributed to the current corrupted public debate—and that an excellent education will lead to a freer, better informed, and civil conversation.

The special interests and insiders—who benefit from the status quo—cannot be counted on to restore quality and affordability. That's why ACTA's work is so important. Alone among reform organizations, we are working to bring outside pressure to bear on our colleges and universities by empowering trustees, alumni, and educational leaders to demand change.

Inside you will read about schools that have added requirements and cut tuitions. You will learn about how we are helping institutions improve their curricula. You'll find out about ACTA's major, multi-year project to overturn the existing broken accreditation system. And you'll find how ACTA is calling trustees to account for responsible and engaged stewardship.

Thanks to you, ACTA is shaping the future of American higher education at a time of massive disruption, identifying key challenges and shifting incentives so that colleges are driven to improve.

2012 was a very good year, and I hope you will enjoy reading about the important work your support makes possible.

Thank you and best wishes!



Anne D. Neal, President

*You run a great operation and are such an important voice to the majority of citizens who want the highest quality of education for themselves, their children, and all others. Trustees must have the courage to set the agenda to make this happen. Keep up the great work.*

– Craig Stewart, president,  
Apex Foundation





# Academic Excellence

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## Back to the Core

Employers complain that newly hired college graduates cannot write accurately and clearly. Researchers show that thousands of students graduate each year *academically adrift*, with no greater intellectual ability than when they entered college.

**American higher education can do better, and ACTA is making sure that it does.**

For the past three years, ACTA's **What Will They Learn?**<sup>™</sup> project has made it possible for parents, donors, and trustees to find out precisely what core subjects each college and university requires its undergraduates to study. And the project has grown! As of this year, ACTA evaluates the core curricula of 1,070 colleges and universities, which educate more than seven and a half million students. For each school included, ACTA identifies whether students are required to complete courses in seven key subjects: Composition, Literature, Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Math, and Science. Schools receive a grade from "A" to "F" based on how many subjects they require.

The results are alarming.

Far too many schools have abandoned their obligation to require a broad liberal arts education. Less than 20% of schools require even a basic course in American history or government, only 5% require a course in economics, and more than one-third fail to require even one college-level

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mathematics course—despite the universally-acknowledged importance of science and mathematics. More than 60% of schools receive a “C” or lower for requiring three or fewer of the seven subjects.

### Changing Incentives

But ACTA’s What Will They Learn?™ project is not just about what is wrong.

**It is about changing incentives in American higher education and encouraging schools to do it right.**

In Virginia, the Beazley Foundation was so shocked by our findings that in 2012 they pulled all funding from higher education in the state until schools improved their core curricula. They pledged major support to the schools that worked to attain “A” status in What Will They Learn?™—a status that, at the time, no Virginia school had achieved.

In response, Regent University strengthened its curriculum, adding requirements in literature and economics in order to move from a “B” to an “A” rated curriculum. We are currently working closely with two other Virginia schools to guide their curricular reforms, and we anticipate that they will achieve “A” status in the next several months.

Across the country, Colorado Christian University also strengthened its curriculum. CCU’s president, former U.S. Senator William Armstrong, sought out ACTA for expert advice on reforming their general education program; the school added a rigorous new science requirement, tightened its literature requirement, and raised its score to an “A.” And a new school—St. Katherine College in Encinitas, CA—has built its curriculum around the seven core areas of What Will They Learn?™. St. Katherine says that their “integrative core is based on criteria defined by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.” And other schools are following their lead.

Schools that do well already in What Will They Learn™ take pride in their achievement—another mark of the project’s increasing public profile. In his State of the University address, the president of the University of Georgia mentioned ACTA’s “A” and said, “We can—and should—all be proud of that recognition.” The University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Baylor University, and The Thomas More College of Liberal Arts all advertise their “A” ratings on their websites, and other colleges justifiably celebrated their strong ratings in What Will They Learn?™.

Yes, the news about What Will They Learn™ is spreading across the nation. Families want reliable information about

*The American Council of Trustees and Alumni annually ranks more than 1,000 colleges and universities on the strength of their core curricula. Last year, UGA was one of only 21 institutions to receive a grade of A in that survey. We can—and should—be proud of that recognition.*

– Michael F. Adams, president,  
University of Georgia,  
State of the University Address



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# WHAT will they LEARN?

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

▶ Watch our new video

DEAN'S LETTER    FAQ    COMPARE SCHOOLS    RATING CRITERIA    "A" LIST    HIDDEN GEMS    ABOUT US    IN THE NEWS

**2012-13 RATINGS**

The search for the right college can be overwhelming. There is one thing other rankings won't tell you: which universities are making sure their students learn what they need to know.

This free resource does tell you, 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.

You'll find more than 1,000 schools around the country.

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

**FIND A SCHOOL**

NAME OF UNIVERSITY  SEARCH

SELECT A STATE  SEARCH

SELECT A REGION  SEARCH

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

**WHAT THEY HAVEN'T LEARNED**  
Results from a new Roper survey on American historical literacy

Only 17% knew the source of the phrase, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people."

**SEE WHICH COLLEGES REQUIRE THESE CORE SUBJECTS**

COMPOSITION    LITERATURE    FOREIGN LANGUAGE    U.S. HISTORY    ECONOMICS    MATHEM

What Will They Learn?™ is a project of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA). © ACTA 1995-2013. All Rights Reserved.



WHAT will they LEARN?™

ACTA expanded the What Will They Learn?™ project in 2012, evaluating 1,070 schools. Institutions that earned an "A" grade received a special logo so that they could display "Top Rated College" on their websites.

ACTA convened a panel of eminent scientists from California to Maryland through video conferencing to discuss criteria for evaluating science courses for What Will They Learn?™.





educational value, and ACTA's rating offers just that. Rather than focusing on the wealth and reputation of a school, ACTA's project focuses on education. It's no wonder that the public is increasingly recognizing ACTA as a go-to source for information. Increasingly we hear from parents and trustees who are contacting college presidents after reviewing What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> and are asking hard questions about why their college is not doing a better job in general education. Major national newspapers, including the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, have covered the project—reaching a circulation of more than 9,000,000! The website has received more than 250,000 hits. And a new What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> web-video called **The \$200,000 Fraud** has been viewed more than 10,000 times.

ACTA is shaking up higher education. We mailed What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> results to the trustees and presidents of every college in the study—showing them how they stacked up against their peers and urging most to do better. The response was immediate. Within a few days three college presidents and four senior vice presidents were in touch, proving that ACTA's report is prompting high-level reviews! Meanwhile, at the University of North Carolina, the Board of Governors announced a new Strategic Plan to “set core competencies for general education programs” and emphasizing the state's commitment to becoming “the national leader in the assessment of student learning gains” in core

liberal-arts skills—goals that ACTA has long promoted as essential to higher-ed reform.

### Strengthening Standards

ACTA is constantly working to improve our What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> standards so that they represent the best practices in liberal arts excellence. For each of the past three years, we have convened a panel of scholars on a topic covered by our report. And in 2012, we assembled distinguished scientists from across the country to define the characteristics of a college-level natural science course and to offer guidance on the best way to evaluate science courses in a general education curriculum.

We have also assembled a national **Council of Scholars**, drawing on outstanding professors from across the country to advise ACTA in its continuing work on What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> and other curricular projects.

#### ACTA Council of Scholars

George Andrews, *Evan Pugh Professor, Mathematics, Pennsylvania State University*

Mark Bauerlein, *professor, English, Emory University*

Marc Zvi Brettler, *Dora Golding Professor, Biblical Studies, Brandeis University*



### The \$200,000 Fraud

This video synopsis of the 2012-2013 What Will They Learn?<sup>™</sup> study of core curricula across the country reveals information every student, parent, or alumnus should know. Take a look at [WhatWillTheyLearn.com](http://WhatWillTheyLearn.com).

## Academic Excellence *continued*

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William Cook, *Distinguished Teaching Professor, History, State University of New York at Geneseo*

Paul Davies, *professor, Philosophy, College of William and Mary*

David C. Doughty, Jr., *professor, Physics, and Dean of the College of Natural and Behavioral Sciences, Christopher Newport University*

William Fagan, *professor, Biology, University of Maryland*

Judith Farr, *professor emerita, English, Georgetown University*

Sidney Gulick, *professor, Mathematics, University of Maryland*

Anatoly Khazanov, *Ernest Gellner Professor Emeritus, Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, and Fellow, British Academy*

Alan Charles Kors, *Henry Charles Lea Professor, History, University of Pennsylvania*

Jon D. Levenson, *Albert A. List Professor, Jewish Studies, Harvard Divinity School*

Molly Levine, *professor, Classics, Howard University*

George R. Lucas, Jr., *Class of 1984 Distinguished Chair, Ethics, Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership,*

*U.S. Naval Academy; professor, Ethics and Public Policy, Graduate School of Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School*

Matthew Malkan, *professor, Astrophysics, UCLA*

Michael Podgursky, *professor, Economics, University of Missouri*

James Sellers, *professor and Director of Undergraduate Mathematics, Pennsylvania State University*

### Claiming the Future

The higher-education landscape is changing and ACTA is adapting accordingly. Students who cannot afford traditional bricks-and-mortar colleges are increasingly turning to online learning. And thanks to a partnership with a unique online platform, ACTA is making a rich core curriculum accessible to a much wider audience than ever before.

With ACTA's input, **StraighterLine**, an innovative provider of online courses, is developing two online core-curricular programs. Both will be unveiled this year, and both are expected to receive "A" grades in ACTA's What Will They Learn?™ study. Once the programs have begun, the ACTA-Straighter-Line curriculum will offer students a solid introductory-year core of liberal arts classes, transferrable for credit to dozens of colleges nationwide, for a cost of well under \$2,000.

*American students are continuously proving to know less in subjects like history. A study released last October by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni and GfK Roper saw abysmal results on surveys gauging American history literacy among college graduates.*

*– Huffington Post, January 11, 2013*



## ACTA Initiative: Historical Literacy

ACTA has been monitoring the state of historical knowledge among college students for over a decade. This year we worked with GfK Roper to survey recent graduates on basic questions of American history.

### WHAT THEY HAVEN'T LEARNED

Results from the Roper Survey Commissioned by ACTA

Of the college graduates surveyed, only **20%** could name James Madison as the "Father of the Constitution."

**43%** did not know that John Roberts is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Less than half of graduates—**48%**—knew George Washington was the American general at Yorktown.

**What Will They Learn.com**

## Restoring America's Memory

### ACTA at the Forefront

The next generation of Americans will know less than their parents know about our history and founding ideals. And many Americans are more aware of what divides us than what unites us. That's why ACTA is engaged—like no other organization—in restoring America's memory. For over a decade, ACTA has been leading the charge to put an end to our historical amnesia. This year, we worked with GfK Roper to survey recent graduates on basic questions of American history and to underscore

why colleges and universities must require U.S. history of their graduates. And, early in 2012, we joined historian Richard Brookhiser, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, and sponsoring member Rep. Frank Wolf, as we testified before the House Oversight Subcommittee to return Washington's birthday celebration to his actual birthday: February 22. To prove our solidarity, ACTA staff turned out in full force on the General's birthday to place a wreath on his tomb. And we watched with pride as articles underscoring the need for historical literacy appeared in newspapers and media outlets across the country.

Democracies are not self-perpetuating; they depend on engaged and educated citizens. Through our Historical Literacy Initiative, our What Will They Learn?™ project, op-eds, presentations, and communications with trustees, ACTA is working tirelessly to remind higher education of its obligation to educate students for informed citizenship. ●



# Accountability

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## Reforming Accreditation

Accreditation is surely not a household word. But it should be. Designed to ensure that federal funds go only to institutions of educational quality, the system—in place for the last 60 years—has seriously stifled innovation, driven up costs, and damaged quality at America’s colleges and universities. Now, thanks to ACTA’s long advocacy, that is changing. ACTA is leading the charge to reform the system and restore true accountability in higher education.

ACTA saw the problems long before anyone else. Because of our drumbeat for reform, many key higher-education leaders have come to understand the issues. The presidents of Princeton and Dartmouth and the provost of Stanford are just a few prominent educators who have publicly criticized the current system and sided with ACTA’s concerns.

## Providing Alternatives

To address the flaws of the current system and lead the way to a new one, ACTA inaugurated in 2012 a new multi-year project to reform the accreditation system. Led by former senator Hank Brown and former Colorado Commission on Higher Education executive director Rick O’Donnell, ACTA’s team is identifying allies and publicly raising concerns about the broken system of quality assurance. They are working to increase the understanding of accreditation issues among opinion leaders and developing a broad consensus for market-based,



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student-sensitive reform focused on financial stability and transparent information.

In the summer of 2012, ACTA's president, along with a colleague on the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI)—which advises the Secretary of Education on accreditation—introduced an alternative to the existing accreditation system that would remove accreditors from their gatekeeping role. The proposal received bipartisan support and was submitted to the Secretary of Education in a packet of recommendations for accreditation reform.

Proving that accreditation has become the hot topic, in his State of the Union address and supplemental materials President Obama included an entire section on “Holding colleges accountable for cost, value and quality” and called on Congress to consider an alternative system focused on performance and cost. As one might imagine, the suggestion to consider a “new, alternative system of accreditation” has received significant media coverage in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *USA Today*. The *Chronicle* specifically noted the NACIQI alternative proposal as a backdrop to the President’s interest in major accreditation reform.

In the weeks and months ahead, ACTA intends to keep pushing, focusing Congressional and public attention on legislative alternatives that, far from increasing federal involvement and intrusion, ensure transparency and accountability to the taxpayer.

### **Challenging the Accreditors**

Accreditation was designed to ensure that federal aid flows only to schools where students get value. Rather than protecting the taxpayer, however, accreditors are often more interested in protecting the prerogatives of faculty and administrators who benefit from the status quo. That’s why ACTA calls out accreditors who try to bully or supplant the legitimate legal authority on campus: the trustees. In December 2012, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) placed the University of Virginia “on warning” for the board’s supposed failure to inform the faculty of its intent to fire president Teresa Sullivan. ACTA moved quickly—filing a complaint with the Department of Education and charging that SACS violated the Constitution and principles of federalism in its wrongful effort to supplant the legal authority of the board.

*If federal accreditors are allowed to substitute their judgment in matters of state law and governance whenever internal constituencies feel aggrieved, they will bring about the sure erosion of institutional autonomy and undermine the ability of governing bodies everywhere to provide needed oversight.*

– ACTA Complaint to the Department of Education, December 31, 2012

We also took our case to the public and to Congress. The Associated Press picked up the story, with coverage in Virginia and as far away as Houston. Hank Brown followed up with a hard-hitting op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* criticizing accreditors for distorting the educational mission of colleges and universities and intervening in trustees' proper oversight.

Almost overnight, the debate changed. When the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) held its annual meeting in late January, Brown's column was the central topic of a panel discussion attended by more than 200! Trustees responded positively to news of our action, including the Board of Regents of the University of Texas system which sought our input on accreditation reform. Virginia governors Jim Gilmore and Bob McDonnell joined ACTA in criticizing the accreditor, as did ACTA trustee advisor Jane Tatibouet, whose column appeared in *The Virginian-Pilot*.

Additionally, ACTA published an op-ed in the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* that noted how accreditors encourage boards of trustees to defer to college presidents and administrators rather than to assume their proper role as institutional leaders. It is the very culture of deference that contributed to the Penn State scandal, a point we made in a *Harrisburg Patriot-News* story.

## Demanding Informed Stewardship

### Standing up for Trustees

More than ever, trustees must resist the forces on campus which would uphold the unsustainable status quo. But too often, college trustees are tempted to defer to the college administrators or are told they must go along to get along. When trustees do take a stand and rough winds blow, someone needs to stand up for their obligation and legal authority to safeguard students and their responsibility to protect the public good.

That "someone" is ACTA.

ACTA took a strong public stand for board authority during the high-profile debate between the University of Virginia Board of Visitors and its president, Teresa Sullivan—a debate that arose shortly after the board's receipt of the ACTA state report, *Diffusion of Light and Education: Meeting the Challenges of Higher Education in Virginia*. While the UVA board action lacked transparency, the visitors rightly understood the need for trustees to focus on issues of quality and cost control—even when the going gets tough.

The episode vividly illustrated the immense push back trustees will face when they dare to ask key questions. That is why ACTA's role in keeping boards focused on the greater public interest—not the needs and demands of



## ACTA on PBS NewsHour

ACTA president Anne D. Neal appeared to discuss the controversy between the University of Virginia Board of Visitors and the president. She said higher education was on a collision course and called for all parties to think of new ways to keep costs low and quality high.



# ACTA Initiative: Accreditation Reform

Hank Brown, former U.S. Senator and former president of the University of Colorado, in “The Rise of the Accrator as Big Man on Campus,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 14, 2013

“The American Council of Trustees and Alumni recently filed a complaint with the Department of Education decrying SACS’s interference with the University of Virginia governance powers and processes established by Thomas Jefferson himself. Anyone who knows American history, and regrettably few students do, would realize that Jefferson would be mighty upset to learn that a bunch of federally empowered bureaucrats are overstepping their authority and interfering with the internal governance of his university.”

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By HANK BROWN | January 15, 2013

### The Rise of the Accrator as Big Man on Campus The gatekeepers of federal student aid wield too much influence in higher education.

Who’s in charge of our colleges and universities—their boards of trustees or the accreditation organizations that are the gatekeepers of federal aid? That’s the question I’m left asking after a decision by the Southern Association of Colleges (SACS), one of six regional accreditors recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, to put the University of Virginia, founded in 1819 by no less than Thomas Jefferson, on “warning.”

SACS’s action comes in the wake of efforts by the University of Virginia’s governing board this summer—later reversed—to remove President Teresa Sullivan in favor of a leader more aggressively focused on cost control. After months of criticism and second-guessing of the board’s decision, last month the accreditor sanctioned the university and placed it on a warning status pending further investigation.

As the former president of two universities, I know this is not the first time accreditors have inappropriately injected themselves into governance issues and contributed to the breakdown of oversight in higher education. As the organizations that control access to federal student aid, accreditors hold much sway over colleges and universities. When they interfere with institutional autonomy there are few trustees—or presidents—for that matter—who are willing to stand up to them.

Accreditors are supposed to protect students and taxpayers by ensuring that federal aid flows only to schools with “educational quality.” But accreditors increasingly interfere in institutional decision-making and use their bully authority to intimidate schools—public or private—than the threat of losing accreditation and with it federal financial aid. That’s why most presidents and trustees quietly accede to accreditors’ demands.

When it comes to accreditors’ real assignment—ensuring educational quality—the record is dismal, on “warning.”

According to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, conducted by the Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, the literacy of college-educated citizens dropped significantly between 1992 and 2003. Of college graduates, only 31% were classified as proficient in reading compared with 40% in 1992.

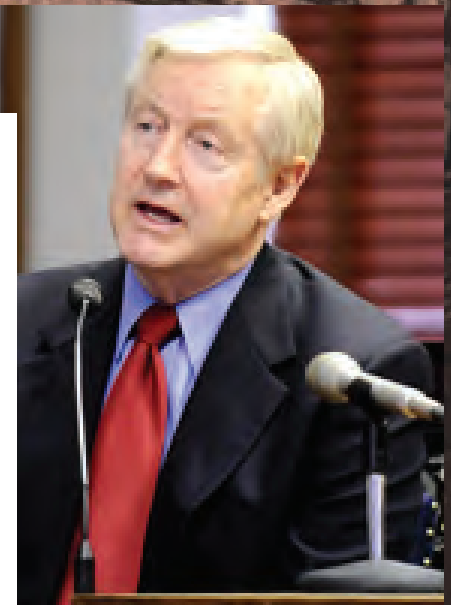
Academic rigor has also declined, evidenced by rampant grade inflation. Fully 47% of all grades at four-year universities today are As. Given this low bar, it is perhaps not surprising that the National Assessment of Adult Literacy found that a majority of four-year college graduates—yes, college graduates—were unable to satisfactorily compare two editorials or compute and compare the cost per ounce of food items. It is any wonder that employers consistently report that college graduates lack the skills and knowledge needed for America to compete in the global work force?

Under the accreditors’ watch, student-loan debt in the United States has topped a trillion dollars, exceeding that of credit-card debt. That’s outrageous. Yet taxpayer dollars are still on the line, as the student-loan default rate climbs, and students continue to borrow and borrow. This serves neither the interests of taxpayers nor students. By almost any measure, the accreditation system designed to protect the taxpayer and ensure quality is a public policy and regulatory failure.

For decades, these accreditors have effectively guaranteed the status quo, focusing on process and resources rather than on educational excellence. The law school accreditor, the American Bar Association, for example, demands a certain percentage of tenured professors at each school and limits the amount of on-line learning that can be offered.

The accrediting body known as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges has repeatedly undermined institutional decision-making. Most famously, in 1992 it threatened the accreditation of California’s Thomas Aquinas College unless it changed its exemplary Great Books curriculum of classic readings, a central component of that Catholic institution’s course work, to make it more “open.” At least the accreditors had the wisdom to back down.

In 2007, when the University of California regents attempted to deal with runaway administrative costs through modest salary and benefit changes, they found themselves spending precious time responding to accreditor complaints that trustees were “unnecessarily harsh” with administrators. These are not isolated incidents. Across the country, boards of trustees are being effectively sidelined in their oversight responsibility, in deference to accreditor pressure.



special interests on campus—is so important. During the UVA controversy, ACTA hit the press with an op-ed in the *Washington Post* and with a high-profile appearance on the **PBS NewsHour** to remind the public that this was not about president Sullivan or the board: it was about the students. The *Wall Street Journal* published a column supporting the principle of UVA board leadership and drawing on ACTA’s data from our Virginia state report.

## Holding Trustees Accountable

Trustees are responsible for their institutions—and when a university neglects its responsibility, the buck stops there.

That was ACTA’s message when the Penn State scandal broke involving assistant coach Jerry Sandusky and the cover-up of his crimes by high-ranking university administrators. In a high-profile op-ed appearing in the *Wall Street Journal*, ACTA called out the trustees for their neglect: “In too many ways the emphasis of higher education in general has become one of reputation building, not values or education. The instinct is to hide problems or pretend they don’t exist rather than face them head-on.”

At the time, ACTA was the only organization that connected the scandal to governance issues. But when former FBI Director Louis J. Freeh published

his exhaustive report on the Sandusky scandal, he echoed our findings and charged the board with failing to hold senior leadership responsible.

Since that time, ACTA has been front and center nationally in discussions relating to Penn State and higher education governance. In the extensive *New York Times* article on Freeh’s report, ACTA is the first outside source quoted—certainly an indication that, more and more, ACTA is recognized as the key watchdog on higher-ed issues. The *Wall Street Journal* gave a “hit” to ACTA for publicizing the issue of board governance—and a “miss” to the NCAA and college presidents who have resisted board oversight.



Above, Jack Wagner—former auditor general of Pennsylvania—lauds ACTA’s efforts to empower trustees and demand public accountability.

At right, trustees gather at the Harvard Faculty Club to participate in a trustee training seminar jointly hosted by ACTA and The Aspen Institute.

# The New York Times

By RICHARD PEREZ-PENA | July 12, 2012  
In Report, Failures Throughout Penn State

Behind the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse scandal at Penn State lay a series of failures all the way up the university's chain of command—shortcomings that were the result of an insular and complacent culture in which football was revered, rules were not applied and the balance of power was dangerously out of whack.

In an investigation lasting more than seven months, Louis J. Freeh, a former director of the FBI, found a legendary football coach bending his supposed bosses to his will, a university staff that was mostly unaware of its legal duties to report violence and sexual abuse, and a university president who had problems from the board of trustees and was guided by a fear of bad publicity.

The trustees, who hired Mr. Freeh to explore the university's failings, fare little better in Mr. Freeh's formal report on his investigation: they are portrayed as passive overseers, so in thrall to the president and the coach that they failed to demand even the barest displays of accountability.

The failure of top officials to stop Mr. Sandusky, a former football assistant who was convicted last month of sexually assaulting 10 boys, reveals numerous individual failings, but it also reveals weaknesses of the university's culture, governance, administration, compliance policies and procedures for protecting children," Mr. Freeh wrote.

The findings have implications for universities across the country, experts said, particularly those where popular sports programs can take on outside influence.

"This really should be a clarion call to trustees across the country to

"ask questions, to demand answers, to insist that the president is responsible to them, not the other way around," said Anne D. Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. "For too long, the boards have been viewed more as boosters than as legal fiduciaries. And where athletics are involved, I think there is an urgent question whether some institutions have lost touch with their purpose."

Penn State's trustees and its new president, Rodney A. Erickson, said they accepted the findings and the blame, and said change was already under way.

"We, the Penn State board of trustees, failed in our obligation to provide proper oversight of the university's operations," said one trustee, Kenneth C. Frazier. "Our hearts remain heavy, and we are deeply ashamed."

But while the trustees were clear about their failings last year, officials continued to tread lightly around the role of previous trustees going back more than a decade, the role of football and the legacy of the former coach Joe Paterno, who died in January.

At a news conference, Mr. Erickson did not answer directly when asked if there had been excessive reverence for the football program. "It's been an important part of student life; it's been an important part of alumni life," he said.

Karen B. Peete, a trustee for two years and the chairwoman of the board since January, was asked if Mr. Paterno should still be venerated on campus.

"The whole topic of Joe Paterno being honored or not being honored is a very sensitive topic," she said.

"This is something that will continue to be discussed with the entire university community."

Lawyers for the former university president Graham B. Spanier, who was forced out last fall, released a statement saying that some of Mr. Freeh's conclusions were "simply not supported by the facts," and that Mr. Spanier did not know until last year of any child abuse allegation against Sandusky.

But they did not address the point made by Mr. Freeh that when concerns were raised about Mr. Sandusky, in 1998, in 2001 and again last year, Mr. Spanier kept the board in the dark. Mr. Freeh found that the board did not follow the common practice of having the president report routinely on looming problems and legal liabilities.

"Because the board did not demand regular reporting of these risks," Mr. Freeh wrote, Mr. Spanier and other officials "did not bring up the Sandusky investigations." Some trustees told Mr. Freeh that the board was little more than a rubber stamp for the administration.

Yet last year, when the first news reports were published of a criminal investigation into Mr. Sandusky, saying that Mr. Spanier and other officials had testified before a grand jury, only one trustee insisted that Mr. Spanier tell the board about it. Officials gave the board a cursory briefing weeks later, with Mr. Spanier assuring them that the problem was minor and the trustees not demanding more, Mr. Freeh reported.

He cited the university's tendency to prize loyalty, promote people from within and keep them for decades, and "a resistance to seeking outside perspectives" as part of the

# The Washington Post

By ANNE D. NEAL | June 24, 2012  
The university of Virginia—ground zero for change

Change is always hard. But often it's necessary. And real change is necessary in higher education.

One of the country's leading universities feels the pain of change right now. Following the ouster of University of Virginia President Teresa Sullivan, all eyes have turned to Charlottesville. The drama unfolding there presents a defining moment for higher education: Incremental change or real innovation? In one camp, the president. In the other, the board.

The old model of increasing budgets and raising tuition—without cutting costs—is unsustainable. Students and their families are suffering. The in-state tuition for U-Va, already takes up nearly 20 percent of the median household income.

That's why U-Va should be viewed as ground zero in a national struggle for excellent and affordable education. While the university board's opaque process in removing Sullivan is regrettable, the board is right to be concerned about the direction of the university.

Higher education is on a collision course. Student debt exceeds credit card debt. Tuition increases at a faster rate than even health care. Studies show that more than a third of students learn virtually nothing in four years of college. And even though the United States spends more per-higher-education student than any other Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development nation, we have worse results.

Something's got to give—or everything will.

Faculty and administrators are up in arms, but these same individuals have, for decades, resisted cutting costs and providing accountability. Meanwhile, U-Va tuition and the administrative share of educational and general expenditures have both jumped by more than a third, each over a six-year period.

Surveys show that the public believes universities can do more and better with less, but most administrators don't agree. In a survey conducted by the Chronicle of Higher Education, almost four out of five college presidents said they were satisfied overall with the state of American higher education.

That kind of complacent thinking has far too long characterized higher education, and that thinking is at the very core of the dispute between the U-Va board and the president.

Had incremental changes begun a decade ago, presidents and boards today might have the luxury of more gradual reform. But that hasn't been the case at many institutions across the country that have chronically plugged budget gaps with tuition hikes. That leaves institutions now facing major financial challenges.

Across the country, administrative expenditures have been growing at a far faster rate than instructional expenditures. The data also indicate that, for research universities such as U-Va, the number of classes the average professor teaches has fallen from 2.9 per term in 1988 to 1.8 in 2004. If faculty simply returned to the 1988 standard, a university could enroll many additional students per

professor, resulting in thousands more students.

But that kind of rethinking is apparently asking too much. The 2012-13 U-Va operating budget, released a month before Sullivan's removal, continues to rely on student tuition and fees and patient revenues from the university's hospital.

Given the university's failure to address urgent issues such as greater faculty teaching loads, new technologies, using buildings more effectively and eliminating unproductive or outdated courses, it's no wonder that a board concerned with spiraling costs could not continue working with a president who approached business as usual, hoping for change later.

Many Virginians are rightfully unhappy—disturbed by the lack of transparency in the board's decision-making process. But it would be sorry indeed if a focus on process eclipsed issues so crucial for the future of U-Va—maintaining its financial health and ensuring that a high-quality education remains affordable.

If institutions want to remain strong, their trustees must demand innovative and imaginative changes and be aware of the urgency of their task. If a university president is not moving in the same direction, then difficult decisions must be made and trustees are going to have to bear the inevitable pushback. This is not the first time that trustees have come under fire for trying to do their job. Last fall, trustees at the University of Texas and Texas A&M found themselves

In 2012, ACTA's unwavering commitment to effective university governance was reflected in national media coverage of the crises at Penn State and the University of Virginia.





And a major op-ed piece in the *Miami Herald*, co-authored by former U.S. Attorney Bob Martinez, applauded ACTA's advocacy for engaged boards.

But we didn't let up. ACTA wrote to every Pennsylvania state legislator and trustee outlining difficulties with the existing board legal structure and calling for legislative reform. Pennsylvania auditor general Jack Wagner showed he recognized ACTA as a leader in this area when he consulted us regarding best practices in board structure, size, and selection. In his extensive report on the Penn State scandal, Wagner adopted many of ACTA's recommendations, including amending the board's structure to remove the president as a voting member. Later, Wagner spoke at an ACTA-sponsored panel at the National Press Club, where he publicly lauded ACTA's efforts to empower trustees and demand public accountability.

That panel, **High Stakes in the Board Room**, brought together Wagner, C. Thomas McMillen, former U.S. Representative from Maryland and trustee of the University of Maryland system, and former Virginia governor Jim Gilmore to talk about the importance of engaged trustees. McMillen addressed the troubling marginalization of trustees in athletic oversight—long an ACTA concern—while Gilmore underscored a governor's important role in appointing informed trustees and holding them accountable.

### Training Trustees

A centerpiece of ACTA's campaign for accountability is our ongoing series of trustee training seminars, and 2012 saw ACTA's program reach new heights. In May we collaborated with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Apex Foundation to host a trustee seminar emphasizing issues of quality and cost. Later in the year, we partnered with The Aspen Institute to hold trustee symposia at Mount Vernon and the Harvard Faculty Club.

The ACTA-Aspen seminars—our largest yet—engaged trustees through such classic texts as Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" and Thomas Jefferson's "Report of the Commissioners" to help them better understand and address the challenges colleges and universities face. Attendees included trustees from a host of prominent higher-education institutions—including Wesleyan University, Haverford College, Carleton College, and the Catholic University of America—who returned to their institutions better able to think deeply about their role in institutional governance, the purpose of a liberal arts core curriculum, and the meaning and requirements of academic freedom.

### Providing Best Practices

No one can effect change like trustees. They have the ultimate power—and the ultimate responsibility—for their

*I can't thank you enough for a wonderful seminar. I really appreciated both the content and the interactions. There are some selections that I would really like to share with some of my fellow trustees.*

– Justin Wender, trustee,  
Carleton College



institutions, and when they understand the need for change, they make it happen.

But first they need understanding—and that's where ACTA's trustee mailings come in. ACTA provides essential information on how institutions perform in a national context. In 2012, ACTA reached out to our list of over 14,000 trustees, representing more than 1,100 institutions, with a series of informative letters and guides on key issues facing higher education. And they included leading figures in higher education.

In June 2012, ACTA collaborated with professor Clayton Christensen of the Harvard Business School and BYU-Idaho's Henry Eyring to write to our extensive trustee database about disruptive innovation. Christensen and Eyring, co-authors of *The Innovative University*, urged trustees to re-assess their institutions radically: to break out of the competitive college-rankings mindset, identify and focus on each school's actual mission, and find new ways to meet students' needs.

In October, we reached out again. Following up on Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa's groundbreaking findings on student learning in *Academically Adrift*, we sent trustees a copy of *Improving Undergraduate Learning: Findings and Policy Recommendations* from the Social Science Research Council, urging trustees to focus on academic standards.

Trustees also receive **ACTA's Trustee's Guides**, which equip trustees to address specific, pressing challenges at their

institutions. This year, *Setting Academic Priorities* addressed the problem of establishing the educational strategy of an institution, and *Substance Abuse on Campus* provided helpful models for fighting the campus drinking culture. Trustees find them highly useful; one board member at Coastal Carolina University wrote to us saying, "I read all of the literature that ACTA sends to me and appreciate it greatly. It helps me ask the right questions and be a better trustee."

### Keeping Costs Down and Quality High

ACTA has long argued that college costs are too high. And we publish metrics to measure how efficient—or inefficient—universities are at keeping their costs under control. Our message of cost-effectiveness has special resonance in these times of economic hardship. And many colleges are starting to heed our call.

In 2011, ACTA released *Made in Maine: A State Report on Public Higher Education*, which warned that steady tuition increases were making it increasingly difficult for Maine's students to attend the state's public universities. Shortly thereafter, the University of Maine board voted to freeze tuition—for the first time in 25 years. This year they froze tuition again.

Thanks to responsible trustees, Temple University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Arizona State University committed to freeze tuition for the 2012-13 school year.

*ACTA, like no other organization, is reaching out to trustees and alumni to insist on a quality liberal arts education that is fundamental to an educated citizenry.*

– David McCullough  
2011 Philip Merrill Award Winner

## ACTA Initiative: Trustee Outreach

Academic quality, affordability, and accountability rarely happen on their own—they take engaged leadership. Trustees are the key. Exercising final responsibility, trustees are in a position to provide a fresh perspective, a healthy balance, and an openness to new solutions. But they can only make this contribution if they are given the information and resources they need. One of the tools ACTA provides trustees is guides on best practices in governance to help trustees address practical challenges. In 2012 we published *Setting Academic Priorities* and *Substance Abuse on Campus*.



And Sewanee reduced tuition by 10%, an almost unprecedented move among prestigious liberal arts colleges, which president John McCardell described at ACTA's ATHENA Roundtable. At these schools, which collectively educate more than 120,000 undergraduates, students will no longer be faced with ever-increasing costs and crippling debt. ACTA's message is being heard!

### Promoting State-by-State Reform

Most students attend public institutions in their own backyards. That's why much of ACTA's research targets public colleges and universities at the state level. ACTA's analyses focus on key metrics: tuition increases; administrative bloat; under-enrolled and

duplicative courses; online delivery; building utilization; and core curricula. These are areas well within trustee control—and they are central to building a higher education system that offers greater quality at a more affordable price than the one we currently see. They are areas where ACTA is genuinely changing incentives for schools and prompting true reform. In the last few years, ACTA has published eleven reports on state university systems, including those in South Carolina, Idaho, Maine, Illinois and Georgia.

In 2012, ACTA published major reports on the Virginia and California state university systems. In Virginia, *Diffusion of Light and Education* found evidence of excessive tuition increases, a widespread failure to graduate students on time, and neglect of the liberal

arts. As outlined above, the report generated a major response, with a Virginia foundation suspending all funding pending proof of improvement. That got schools' attention.

Our California report had similar success. In May 2012, ACTA partnered with the Pacific Research Institute and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education to publish our most ambitious and extensive report to date: *Best Laid Plans: The Unfulfilled Promise of Public Higher Education in California*. California boasts the largest and most storied university system in the country, but ACTA's research shows that it is also one of the America's most troubled. Costs are out of control. Tuition and fees have increased at least 63% at California public universities in the last five years,

and at some institutions they have nearly doubled. Waste and misuse are rampant—indeed, ACTA found that many universities spend tens of millions of dollars on new buildings even while the buildings they already have are underused.

And what about the most important question—what are students learning? Often the answer is “not much.” In the University of California system, no school requires more than three of the seven What Will They Learn?™ subjects, and two schools require none—not math, not U.S. history, not English composition, nor any other core subject is required at UC-Berkeley or UC-Davis.

ACTA's report drew wide attention—including an extended correspondence from UC System president Mark Yudof and a conversation about the report's findings with UC Board of Regents chairman Sherry Lansing. The report was covered in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Press Democrat*, the website Real Clear Politics, and other media sources. The *Orange County Register* included an op-ed by ACTA's Michael Poliakoff and Andrew Gillen identifying ways to cut costs and serve students more effectively.

And our custom web-video **What's going on in California?** has had more than 22,000 views on YouTube, not to mention terrific coverage by Instapundit, The Blaze, Breitbart TV, and HotAir.com.

Through the summer and fall, ACTA continued to promote the California report and to draw attention to problems in California's public higher-education system. In September we were gratified when Governor Jerry Brown vetoed a bill that would have diverted Cal State faculty away from quality teaching, as ACTA and others had recommended.

And in November, we were pleased to help shape a statewide Reason-Rupe poll showing growing public concern about public cost and accountability. Using robocalls and a hard-hitting letter to the legislature, ACTA is currently calling for hearings, saying it's time trustees publicly outlined how they will utilize hard-earned taxpayer dollars to ensure California retains a top-notch educational system.

### **Working with Governors**

Governors, of course, play a key role in ensuring educational quality. They appoint trustees at public universities, they stand behind trustees who make hard choices, and they hold trustees accountable if they become complacent. Yet, many insiders on our college campuses believe they know better how to run the universities. That is why working with governors—helping them to select good trustees and prepare them for informed stewardship—has always been a key part of ACTA's outreach. This year we

*[C]osts can be substantially reduced, without a diminution of quality. In fact, in the long run the disruptive innovations that produce lower cost can enhance the quality of a college degree, just as they have in other industries. The key is to take a fresh look at what students need to learn from a higher education, with an eye on innovative technologies and good-old-fashioned principles of management.*

– Clayton Christiansen, professor,  
Harvard Business School,  
in letter to ACTA's trustee database



## ACTA Initiative: State Reports

ACTA's state reports press for state-by-state reforms with in-depth analyses of higher education in individual states. In 2012, we released *Diffusion of Light and Education: Meeting the Challenges of Higher Education in Virginia* and *Best Laid Plans: The Unfulfilled Promise of Public Higher Education in California*. Both changed the conversation. The Virginia report received extensive press coverage and prompted the Beazley Foundation to pull all higher education funding in the state until schools improved their core curricula. The California report was featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Press Democrat* and the *Orange County Register*. A companion online video, "What's going on in California?," which launched with the report, has reached 22,000 views—and the number is still growing.



teamed up with several governors to address higher-education issues in the states.

After ACTA released *Prepared in Mind and Resources*, our state report on public higher education in South Carolina, ACTA president Anne Neal spoke at the governor's Public Higher Education Conference. Governor Haley called ACTA a "rock star" for its leadership on issues of cost and quality, and nearly 250 trustees, policymakers, and business leaders attended. ACTA's president was also a featured speaker at the 2012 Complete College Ohio Conference, hosted by the Ohio Board of Regents,

presenting sobering statistics on graduation rates at Ohio schools and practical steps for improvement.

### Keeping Teachers Teaching

This year we also took on a major driver of college costs: professors who rarely teach. In *Selling Students Short: Declining Teaching Loads at Colleges and Universities*, ACTA researcher-economist Andrew Gillen exposes a disconcerting trend: on average, professors spend less time teaching than they used to. Much less, in fact. Over a 16-year period, teaching loads declined by an estimated 25%. This means that

colleges need to hire more professors to teach the same number of classes. Translated: higher cost.

Released in partnership with Education Sector, this report is just one of a continuing series of exposés by ACTA on the rising cost of higher education and what must be done to provide students an affordable education. ①



# Academic Freedom

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## Protecting Free Speech on Campus

Imagine you are a student, and you can't express your opinions on campus. Or maybe the administration bullies your student group into disinviting a speaker, or your school has made it nearly impossible to serve your country through the ROTC program.

All of these are real problems on campuses that too often fail to foster academic freedom. The university should be a place where free expression of diverse views is the first and most sacred principle, even when those viewpoints are perceived as unwelcome or offensive. This principle lies at the heart of a university education.

### **That is why ACTA actively speaks up for free speech on campus.**

Our state reports evaluate intellectual diversity and free speech at public university systems across the country. For our May 2012 report, *Best Laid Plans*, ACTA partnered with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education to review the speech codes at every four-year public college or university in California. Distressingly, the report found that *every single one* restricts academic freedom; 18 out of 32 schools have "red light" speech codes, the most restrictive category in FIRE's ratings. Even a negative comment can be subject to disciplinary action.

ACTA also criticizes "all comers" policies, university policies that restrict students' rights to participate in religious and political organizations as they see fit. These policies require that student organizations accept, as



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members and even leaders, people who do not share the group's beliefs; they make it difficult for political and religious groups to function, and they often force religious groups to leave campus.

ACTA has been a national leader on this issue since our *Freedom of Association* trustee's guide in 2010. This year we came to the defense of embattled student groups at Tufts and Vanderbilt, criticizing those institutions for forcing religious groups off campus. Vanderbilt, where more than a dozen groups have been driven off campus, is a source of continuing controversy. ACTA will keep up the pressure in 2013.

### Challenging Political Correctness

We also challenge political correctness when it rears its ugly head. In May, we stood up for former *Wall Street Journal* columnist Naomi Schaefer Riley when she was fired from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on scurrilous claims of racism. Riley, a higher-education journalist with nearly 15 years' experience, had criticized the rigor of African-American Studies programs—apparently a sacred cow at the *Chronicle*. When she was dismissed, ACTA fired back, in print and on the web. We pointed out that Riley's critics were nothing but academic bullies, leveling accusations but refusing seriously to address Riley's arguments.

But that's not all. ACTA defended a professor at the U.S. Merchant Marine academy who faced dismissal for a single, unintentionally offensive joke.

And in November, we challenged Fordham University when they bullied the College Republicans into disinventing controversial conservative speaker Ann Coulter. We pointed out that—whatever you think of a speaker's politics—the answer to speech is not silence or intimidation, but more speech.

### Advancing ROTC

For many years, ACTA has virtually singlehandedly called for the restoration of ROTC at elite college campuses. And in 2011 our message broke through: Naval ROTC returned to Harvard; Yale established Naval and Air Force programs; and Columbia and Stanford re-established ties with the officer-training program.

In 2012, we kept the pressure on, with heartening results. Harvard recognized an Army ROTC program and permitted students in the Army to train on campus for the first time in 40 years. At Columbia, students participated in Naval ROTC just 18 months after the official vote of the University Senate. At Yale, campus leaders welcomed back Air Force

*ACTA also has fought with valor the laziness, self-indulgence, and inappropriate politicization—from any direction—of professors who made students the involuntary audience of a professor's whims, omissions, and propaganda.*

— Alan Charles Kors,  
Henry Charles Lea Professor of  
History, University of Pennsylvania,  
in remarks at ATHENA 2012





# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

By WALTER E. WILLIAMS | September 18, 2012

## Academic dishonesty fails students

Many of the nation's colleges and universities have become cesspools of indoctrination, intolerance, academic dishonesty and an "enlightened" form of racism. This is a decades-old trend.

In a 1991 speech, Yale President Benno Schmidt warned: "The most serious problems of freedom of expression in our society today exist on our campuses. The assumption seems to be that the purpose of education is to induce correct opinion rather than to search for wisdom and to liberate the mind." Unfortunately, parents, taxpayers and donors have little knowledge of the extent of the dishonesty and indoctrination. There are several clues for telling whether there's academic dishonesty and indoctrination. One is to see whether a college spends millions for diversity and multiculturalism centers and hires directors of diversity and inclusion, managers of diversity recruitment, associate deans for diversity, and vice presidents of diversity. See whether colleges spend money to indoctrinate incoming freshmen with programs such as "The Tunnel of Oppression," in which, among other things, students call one another vile racial and sexual names to develop

"oppression awareness." An American Council of Trustees and Alumni survey in 2004 of 50 selective colleges found that 49 percent of students complained of professors frequently injecting political comments into their courses even if they had nothing to do with the subject, while 46 percent reported that professors used their classrooms to promote their own political views. One English professor told his students that "conservatism champions racism, exploitation and imperialist war." The "critical race studies" program at UCLA School of Law says that its aim is to "transform racial justice advocacy." At an East Coast college, an exam was found with questions such as, "How does the United States 'steal' the resources of other (third world) countries?" The answer marked correct was, "We steal through exploitation." An economics professor told his class, "The United States of America, backed by facts, is the greediest and most selfish country in the

world." A Germanic languages professor told his class, "Bush is a moron, a simpleton and an idiot." A recent National Association of Scholars report, "A Crisis of Competence," reported that the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute found that "more faculty now believe that they should teach their students to be agents of social change than believe that it is important to teach them the classics of Western civilization." Use of public funds for private advocacy not only is academic dishonesty but also borders on criminality. In today's college climate, we shouldn't be surprised by the outcomes. A survey conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut gave 81 percent of the seniors a D or an F in their knowledge of American history. Many students could not identify Valley Forge, words from the Gettysburg Address or even the basic principles of the U.S. Constitution. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that only 31 percent of college graduates can read and understand a complex book. A 2007 national survey titled "Our Fading Heritage: Americans Fail a Basic Test on Their History and Institutions," by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, found that earning a college degree does little to increase knowledge of America's history. Among the questions asked were: "Who is the commander in chief of the U.S. military?" "Name two countries that were our enemies during World War II." The average score among college graduates was 57 percent, or an F. Only 24 percent of college graduates knew the First Amendment prohibits establishing an official religion for the United States. A 2006 survey conducted by the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management found that only 24 percent of employers thought graduates of four-year colleges were "excellently prepared" for entry-level positions. Our sad state of college education proves what my grandmother admonished: "If you're doing something you're not supposed to be doing,

## Free to Teach, Free to Learn

A Trustee Conference on Understanding and Maintaining Academic Freedom in Higher Education



In 2012, ACTA continued its efforts to expand ROTC and protect free speech on campus. In 2013, we will host a major conference for trustees to deepen understanding of academic freedom.

REGISTER NOW

Thursday, April 25, 2013  
New York, NY



A nationally syndicated journalist weighs in on the threat to academic freedom at colleges and universities, citing ACTA's report, *Politics in the Classroom*, a study of 50 top-ranked institutions conducted by the Center for Survey Research & Analysis at the University of Connecticut.

and Naval ROTC programs with a formal military ceremony, while at Brown the Board of Trustees, rejecting the president's advice, called for an ROTC office on campus.

This is, indeed, all good news, but there is still more work to be done. In letters to the boards of trustees at Harvard and Brown, we've outlined additional steps they must take to realize robust ROTC programs on campus: recognizing all branches of ROTC; settling the question of course credit; providing accessible transportation; and offering courses in military history.

We know, of course, that only a minority of students will serve in ROTC. But all students deserve to understand the military. That's why we are pushing aggressively to return the study of military history which has nearly vanished at many of our most prominent colleges and universities. In letters to the boards and presidents of Yale, Harvard, Brown, and Princeton, we've reminded them that understanding the military is essential for future leaders in a dangerous world.


### Exploring Academic Freedom

In 2013, we're poised to carry our work one step further with a major conference in New York City on academic free-

dom. **Free to Teach, Free to Learn** will give trustees special training about the ways that schools restrict students' rights and intellectual openness—and what they can do about it.

The conference will feature several of the most important proponents of academic freedom today, including CUNY board chairman and First-Amendment expert Benno Schmidt, University of St. Thomas scholar Neil Hamilton, and Columbia law professor Philip Hamburger.

An extensive trustee's guide to academic freedom will accompany the conference; it will include contributions from Larry Summers, Judge José Cabranes, Benno Schmidt, Alan Charles Kors and Harvey Silverglate.

The guide and the conference underscore ACTA's continuing focus on academic freedom, helping trustees to understand that they have the final authority—and responsibility—to insist on professional responsibility and intellectual diversity on campus. 

*Military history deepens students' understanding of freedom, democracy, and the American experience, and neglecting that history short-changes Yale undergraduates and the world they will enter upon graduation.*

– From a letter by Alumni for Yale's Future to incoming president Peter Salovey, coordinated by ACTA





# Getting the Word Out

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## Informing the Public

Reform doesn't happen in a vacuum: it requires a public that understands the issues and knows what must be done. That is why ACTA uses traditional and new media to reach all higher-ed stakeholders: students, parents, trustees, alumni, policymakers, and faculty. In 2012, the resonance of ACTA's message was greater than ever before!

*We appeared in 32 of the nation's top 50 papers, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*, as well as hundreds of local and regional papers. Altogether, we were mentioned in more than 250 newspapers, representing 46 states and the District of Columbia, with a combined circulation of nearly 39 million people. We've also appeared on other media platforms, including television (the PBS NewsHour) and the radio.*

In addition, we have magnified our outreach through the internet and new media. ACTA created a **new website** ([www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org)) in 2012 that makes it much easier for trustees, parents, and students to access our materials. We released two direct-to-web videos that inform the public about challenges in higher education—and between them they have received more than 32,000 views! And we have expanded our social media presence through daily posts to facebook and an increased presence on twitter and ACTA's new blog, **The Forum: A Town Square for Higher Ed**. In the last two months our facebook traffic has multiplied almost ten times over!



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## ACTA “On The Road”

Highlights from 2012:

### Seminars and Conferences

Hosted trustee seminar, “From Business to the Boardroom: Engaging Issues of Quality and Cost,” in Seattle, WA, with the Gates and Apex Foundations.

Partnered with The Aspen Institute to co-host “Academic Leadership and the Challenges Facing Higher Education,” a trustee training seminar at George Washington’s Mt. Vernon.

Partnered with The Aspen Institute to host a trustee training seminar at the Harvard Faculty Club.

Hosted 2012 ATHENA Roundtable, dedicated to academic freedom, excellence, and accountability.

Presented the eighth annual Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education.

### Presentations and Testimony

Presented findings of Virginia report at Regent University ceremony.

Testified on Capitol Hill in favor of restoring George Washington’s birthday celebration to February 22.

Presented findings of Virginia report to the Randolph-Macon College Board of Trustees.

Participated in “Higher Education and the Role of the Trustee,” Liberty Fund conference, Indianapolis, IN.

Presented on “What Would Thomas Jefferson Do?” at The College of William and Mary.

Addressed The Loblolly Group, Loblolly, FL, on “Credentialed, but Uneducated.”

Delivered “Habits of application, of order, and the love of virtue” at the Hudson Institute panel “What Would Jefferson Do?” on the UVA crisis.

Presented at the Republican Governors Public Policy Committee Education Symposium, Phoenix, AZ.

Hosted talks by Dan Schneider, policy advisor for Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, and Kati Haycock, president, Education Trust.

Presented at Ashoka conference on “Education in the Age of Innovation.”

Participated in invitation-only discussion of higher-ed issues at American Enterprise Institute.

Presented at a Family Policy Lecture: “Save Me From College Debt.”

*Your service to our country and our higher education system cannot be underestimated. ... The speeches, pamphlets, research, books, seminars, news bureaus, magazines, to mention a few of the ways that ACTA is kept constantly in the public venue, and very well targeted as well.*

– Jane Tatibouet, former trustee, University of Hawaii & Cornell University

## Getting the Word Out *continued*

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Presented to over 200 attendees at the South Carolina Public Higher Education Conference.

Presented at “Accreditation, Assessment and Accountability” conference sponsored by the Reinvention Center, University of California.

Addressed the 2012 Ohio College Completion Conference, Columbus State Community College, Columbus, OH.

Participated in 2012 NACIQI meeting, advising Secretary of Education on federal accreditation.

Hosted “High Stakes in the Board Room” panel at the National Press Club.

Met with leaders of The National Council on Teacher Quality.

Met with Colorado Christian University president Bill Armstrong and other key CCU administrators to advise CCU on strengthening its core curriculum.

Sent extensive recommendations to Pennsylvania legislature and the auditor general on reforming Penn State charter and governance.

### **ATHENA Roundtable**

#### **Higher Ed: Working Hard or Hardly Working?**

Are students learning? Are they being prepared for the workforce? Are our colleges and universities sustainable—in

their business models, their funding structures, and their very ideas of what a university ought to be?

Those are the questions that higher-ed experts asked—and answered—at ACTA’s provocative ATHENA Roundtable, entitled “Higher Ed: Working Hard or Hardly Working.”

With record attendance and a terrific program including prominent scholars and education leaders from around the country, nearly 100 education leaders took on the most challenging questions facing higher education. Underscoring ACTA’s long-time focus on historical literacy, Professor William Cook of SUNY-Geneseo offered the morning keynote, examining Tocqueville’s thoughts on American education and society. Then it was on to more practical applications as sociologist and author of *Academically Adrift* Richard Arum, Baylor University president Kenneth Starr, and Oklahoma Secretary of Education Phyllis Hudecki tackled the question: Are Students and Employers Getting What They Need?

Continuing our tradition of a lively colloquy after the lunch hour, college presidents Stephen Joel Trachtenberg and John McCardell, Temple University trustee Lew Gould, and Judge Janice Rogers Brown, chair of the academic affairs committee of Pepperdine University’s Board of Regents, offered their thoughts on whether higher education is on a collision course, endorsing ACTA’s concerns about quality and cost.

*We must tell you that the day at the Athena Roundtable was the most wonderful experience and intellectual inspiration that either of us had had in a very long time, if ever. We are already making plans for November 8, 2013 at Mt. Vernon.*

– Roger & Edna Haskell  
ATHENA participants



**Phyllis Hudecki**



**William Cook**



**Mark Bauerlein and Charles Kolb**



**Stephen Trachtenberg and John McCardell**



**Kenneth Starr**



**Richard Arum**



**Andrew Delbanco**



**Bob Shrum, Anne Neal, Alan Kors and Tom Oliphant**



**Janice Brown**





“I want to thank ACTA and Anne Neal for this honor, but also for ACTA’s forceful, steadfast, and ingenious work on behalf of excellence and accountability in higher education.”

– Thomas M. Rollins, founder, The Teaching Company



Last but not least, Professors Andrew Delbanco of Columbia and Mark Bauerlein of Emory joined Charles Kolb, former president of the Committee for Economic Development, to address the most important question: Where Do We Go From Here? Given the many challenges facing higher education, it was heartening to hear so many wise scholars and leaders affirming ACTA's focus on academic rigor, core curricula, and the importance of a rich liberal arts education.

### 2012 Philip Merrill Award

The soul of ACTA is learning: all of our efforts aim to ensure that students everywhere have access to a true liberal arts education. For that reason, each year we present the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. It is the only prize of its kind in the nation that singularly supports and lauds those who advance a rich liberal arts education and the teaching of American history and the Western tradition.

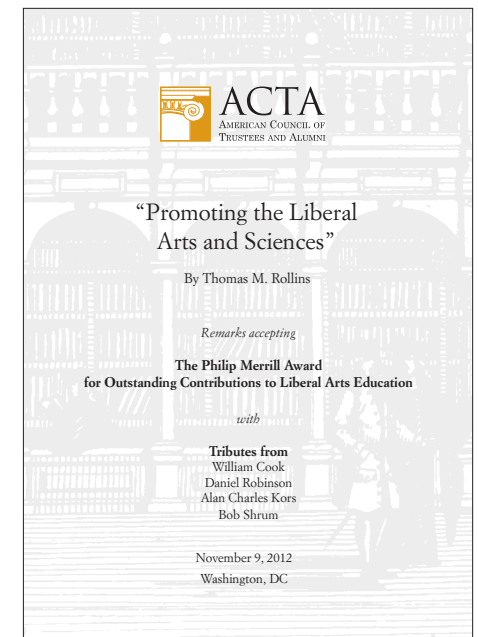
In 2012, ACTA presented the eighth annual Award to Thomas M. Rollins. A nationally-recognized debater, Rollins graduated from Georgetown University with a major in philosophy, and then entered Harvard Law School where he became an editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. After practicing law for a few years, and serving as Chief Counsel for the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, he went in a new direction, starting The Teaching Company.

The rest, as they say is history. The Teaching Company has been in the business for over 20 years of offering video and audio lectures on the foundational disciplines that have shaped civilization. Rollins ignited the public's passion for lifelong learning by recruiting the most dynamic professors from colleges and universities across the country and making their lectures available to schools and all who are interested in continuing their education. His success in bringing the finest instruction to so many thousands of learners throughout the world is one of the most significant contributions to the liberal arts in our time and acknowledgement that, in a democratic society, learning must not be the privilege of the few, but rather the birthright of all.

Colleagues and friends paid rich tribute, including professors William Cook, Alan Charles Kors, and Daniel Robinson and longtime friend and political consultant Bob Shrum—proving that support for the liberal arts crosses all party lines! ●

*Tom Rollins ... certainly deserves ACTA's Philip Merrill Award. His contributions to liberal arts education have been immense. I can't imagine how many people are so much better educated because of the work of The Teaching Company.*

– Laurence H. Tribe, Carl M. Loeb University Professor and professor of Constitutional Law, Harvard Law School



Tom Rollins' remarks were distributed to our supporters and are available online.



# About Us

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## Board of Directors

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Jody Wolfe  
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### **ACTA Board Member Wins Prestigious Awards**

Congratulations! ACTA board member Edwin Meese III received two prestigious awards in 2012: the Bradley Prize for Outstanding Achievement and the Admiral Carey Foundation's Commitment to Leadership Award. We offer our sincere thanks for Mr. Meese's dedicated service to his country.

### **Staff**

Anne D. Neal, Esq.  
*President*

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*Vice President of Policy*

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*Senior Program Officer for Communications*

Gregory Lewin  
*Program Officer for Curricular Reform*

Courtney Michaluk  
*Program Associate for Development*

*Compliments to ACTA for dedicated work that seems to be gaining traction among a growing number of anxious parents, and even state legislators and the national Ruling Class.*

- Lawrence Okamura,  
associate professor of history,  
University of Missouri

# 2012 Financial Statements

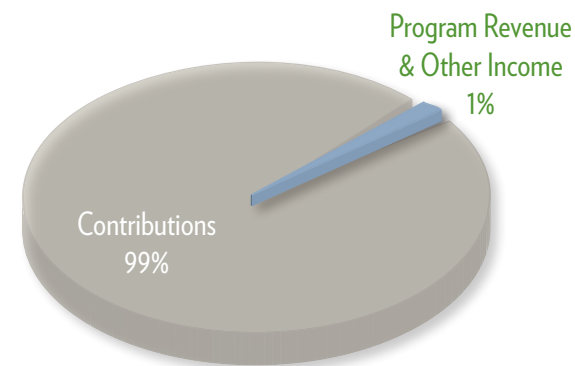
## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as of December 31, 2012

<b>Assets</b>	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$1,540,443
Receivables	27,000
Prepayments and Other Assets	33,751
Property and Equipment (Net)	<u>74,652</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,675,846</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	
Accounts Payable	45,182
Retirement Plan Payable	19,144
Deferred Income	<u>115,000</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>179,326</b>
Unrestricted Net Assets	1,009,528
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	<u>486,992</u>
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>1,496,520</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b><u>\$1,675,846</u></b>

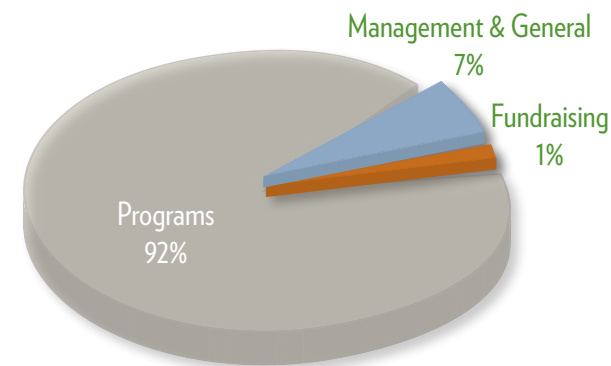
## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES as of December 31, 2012

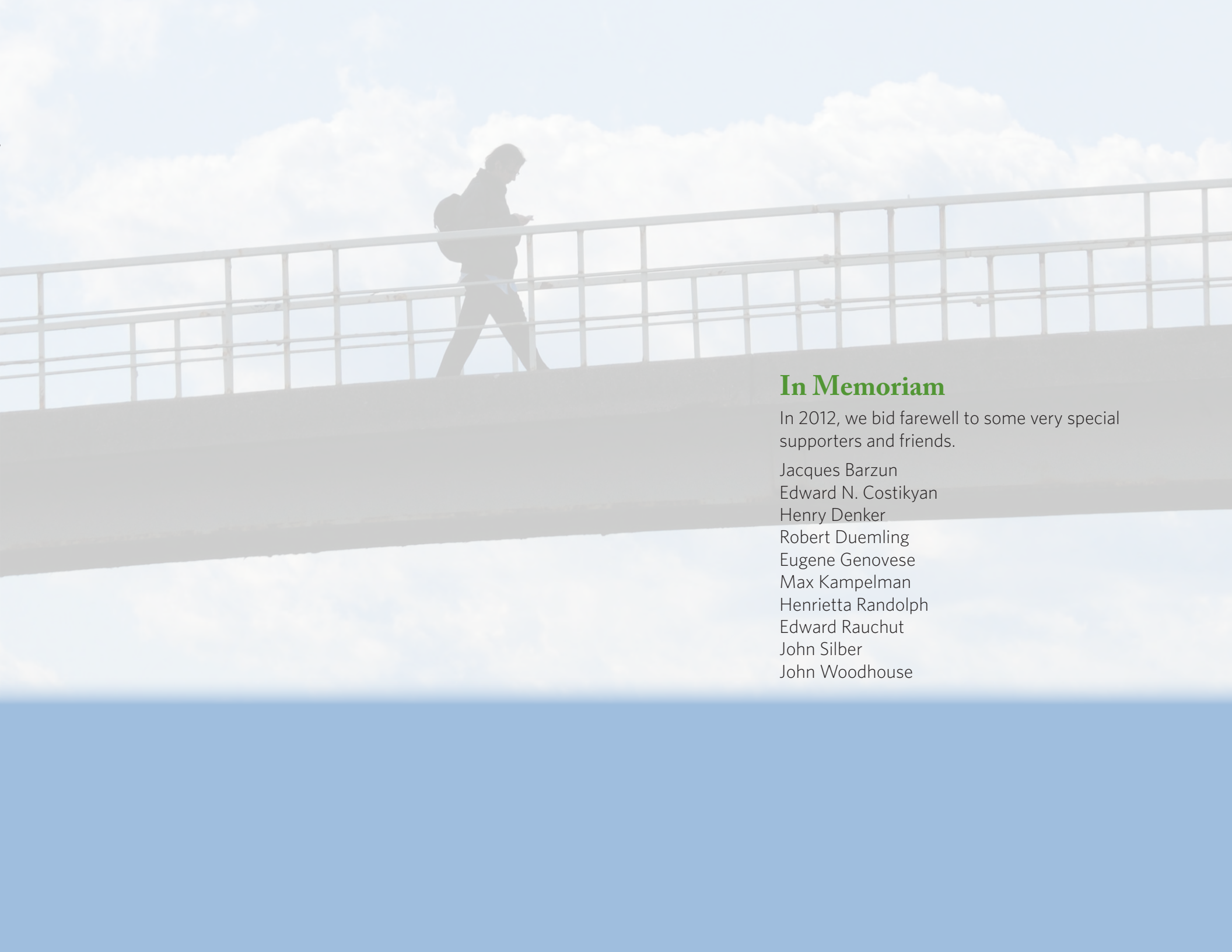
<b>Revenue and Support</b>	
Contributions and Grants	\$1,999,787
Interest and Dividends	402
Program Revenue	14,550
Miscellaneous Income	<u>2,915</u>
<b>Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>2,017,654</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Program Expenses	1,449,081
Fundraising	21,929
Management and General	<u>106,394</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,577,404</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>440,250</b>
<b>Net Assets, beginning of year</b>	<b><u>1,056,270</u></b>
<b>Net Assets, end of year</b>	<b><u>\$1,496,520</u></b>

## 2012 OPERATING REVENUE



## 2012 OPERATING EXPENSES





## In Memoriam

In 2012, we bid farewell to some very special supporters and friends.

Jacques Barzun  
Edward N. Costikyan  
Henry Denker  
Robert Duemling  
Eugene Genovese  
Max Kampelman  
Henrietta Randolph  
Edward Rauchut  
John Silber  
John Woodhouse





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