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September 19, 2024

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees:

I am writing to you today in response to a troubling situation taking place at Sarah Lawrence College. As described in *Minding the Campus*, a student group that calls itself the Divestment Coalition is targeting distinguished Professor Samuel Abrams for his staunch support of Israel in the war against Hamas. The group has led boycotts of the professor’s classes, classes which have nothing to do with the conflict, intimidated potential students, and spread malicious propaganda about the integrity of the professor, ultimately leading to the attempted cancellation of one of the college’s most esteemed scholars. To make matters worse, the college administration has done nothing to correct the situation. Fortunately, because of Professor Abrams’s distinguished record, his classes filled with students who chose to take his courses. The attempted cancellation, however, was noisome and a stain on the reputation of Sarah Lawrence College.

This is a moment when the board of trustees can properly call upon the administration to exercise moral leadership in condemning publicly such attempts at coercion and intimidation. It is also a time when the board should ensure that the administration enforces the student code of conduct.

As a nonprofit committed to academic freedom, academic excellence and accountability at our nation’s colleges and universities, my organization, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), believes that students have the right to exercise free speech in accordance with college policies. ACTA celebrates the rights that both students and faculty have to speak freely. We also recognize that sometimes controversial topics may produce uncomfortable conversations. We firmly believe that the way to approach these topics is not by silencing the voices of those with whom we disagree, but by exchanging ideas, listening, and growing wiser.

However, bullying and harassment have no place at Sarah Lawrence College. As a trustee, you have the ability, and responsibility, to implement and uphold school policies that protect both students and faculty on campus.

PROMOTING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EXCELLENCE

1730 M Street NW, Suite 600 Washington, DC 20036

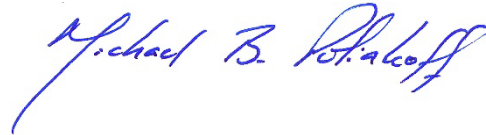
T (202) 467-6787; (888) ALUMNI-8 F (202) 867-6784 info@GoACTA.org GoACTA.org

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From our work with trustees at colleges and universities across the country, ACTA recognizes the challenges governing boards face in pivotal times. As you navigate this difficult situation, ACTA is here to help.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Poliakoff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Michael Poliakoff, Ph.D.
President