

INFLECTION POINT

Transforming America's Colleges and Universities

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

American Council of Trustees and Alumni



ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

Promoting **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**, **ACADEMIC FREEDOM**, and **ACCOUNTABILITY** at America's colleges and universities.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to academic excellence, academic freedom, 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 nearly 1,300 colleges and universities, including over 23,000 current board members. Our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, reaches over 13,000 readers.





FROM THE PRESIDENT

The good news is that America is awake to the urgent need for transformative change in higher education. We are at a turning point: ACTA's admonitions to make a college education affordable and indisputably valuable for students and our nation are being heeded as never before. And more good news: We are a nation of problem solvers, and our colleges and universities can once more become the unquestioned envy of the world.

Complaining about the runaway cost of a college education alters very little, but putting a spotlight on how each institution prioritizes spending will bring about significant change, and change for the better. Following up on our release last year of *How Much is Too Much? Controlling Administrative Costs through Effective Oversight*, we continued the momentum

and built a website called HowCollegesSpendMoney.com. Now college leadership, policymakers, and the public have unprecedented access to the spending patterns of over 1,500 institutions. We have refocused the conversation about higher education finance. We have democratized access to the data in order to enable honest, informed discussion about the way in which scarce higher education dollars get spent.

Right after the September 11 attack on our nation, the late Bruce Cole, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and a devoted ACTA friend, called educators to duty. He wrote, "Defending our homeland requires not only successful military campaigns; it also depends on citizens understanding their history, their institutions, and their ideals." That is why ACTA is actively engaged with the academic leadership of institutions large and small to ensure that every graduate is ready for informed citizenship. We have steadily increased the number of our "Oases of Excellence" programs that bring the study of free markets, the Founders, Western heritage, and Great Books to colleges and universities where these topics are too often underrepresented.



I am frequently in front of audiences packed with business, civic, and political figures. No topic more interests such people today than higher education. I always implore them to use the influence they undoubtedly have at one or more institutions to press for the kind of reforms ACTA advocates with such clarity and tenacity.

—The Honorable Mitch Daniels, President, Purdue University

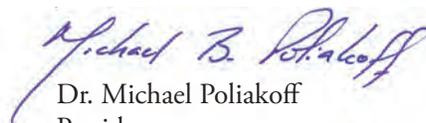
Our What Will They Learn?® survey of core requirements has gotten an unprecedented response in the past year, with over 325,000 website visits, among them 75,000 new users. We are not resting in this campaign: Our team built a database of 50,000 names and addresses of high school counselors, so that through them we can get crucial information to college-bound students and their parents about the academic rigor and commitment to student learning of over 1,120 colleges and universities.

For years, ACTA alerted policymakers to the danger of accrediting agencies' encroachment into the prerogatives and mission of colleges and universities. This year, we were called to defend a group of religious institutions from an accreditor's initiative that could well have forced them to choose between their fidelity to the rules of personal conduct that their faith requires or continuation of federal student aid. We brought the case before the public, congressional leaders, and the U.S. Secretary of Education. The religious institutions prevailed, and ACTA will now advocate for changes in statute that will ensure such situations do not recur.

Our efforts to protect and foster the free exchange of ideas in higher education are also bearing fruit. Shortly after we released *Building a Culture of Free*

Expression on the American College Campus—written by Professor Joyce Lee Malcolm—the Chancellor of the California State University System (CSU) asked for copies to be distributed and discussed at a meeting of all of the CSU campus presidents. Steadily, the colleges and universities with which we work are adopting the Chicago Principles of Freedom of Expression, committing themselves to the freedom to question and debate that is at the very heart of liberal education.

This is an exciting moment for ACTA. Our mission is to prompt the productive changes in higher education that will ensure that graduates leave college not with crippling debt but with a diploma that signifies readiness for informed citizenship and a productive career. The steadily increasing receptivity of higher education leadership, the media, and the public to ACTA's common sense solutions tell us that at this inflection point, American higher education will move to a higher level of quality and productivity. ACTA will continue its untiring efforts on behalf of higher education and our nation.



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ACTA IN 2018

2018 By The Numbers..... 2

The Three “A’s”

Accountability: Empowering Trustees 4

Academic Excellence: Equipping Students..... 7

Academic Freedom: Transforming Campus Culture.. 10

National Reach

Informing the Public Conversation 12

Who We Are..... 16



GoACTA.org
AcademicRenewal.org
HowCollegesSpendMoney.com
WhatWillTheyLearn.com



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2018 BY THE NUMBERS

80 colleges and universities have investigated their spending patterns due to ACTA's **Project on Administrative Costs**.

24 schools and state systems sought advice on how to improve their grade in ACTA's **What Will They Learn?**[®] ratings.

ACTA provided help to nearly **100** institutions serving more than **1,000,000** undergraduate students.

ACTA made **662** appearances in print, broadcast, and online media—including newspapers in **44** states.

Visits to **WhatWillTheyLearn.com** increased by **30%**; new users increased by **54%**.

22 new institutions implemented the **Chicago Principles** of freedom of expression, bringing the total to 58.

ACTA's **Fund for Academic Renewal** helped donors plan targeted higher education gifts totaling nearly **\$10 million**.

Higher Ed Now listenership rose **125%**. **The Forum** blog visits increased nearly **50%**. Facebook members jumped **175%**.

ACTA fulfilled over **1,000** requests for our reports, guides, and informational materials.

THE THREE “A’s”

Accountability

Help trustees and higher education leaders advance accountability at colleges and universities through increased engagement on issues of quality and cost.

Academic Excellence

Work with colleges and universities to uphold high academic standards through a shared foundation of skills and knowledge that prepares students for career and citizenship.

Academic Freedom

Help institutions preserve and foster a campus culture that promotes intellectual diversity, free inquiry, and the free expression of ideas.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Empowering Trustees

ACTA believes that lay governance has long been one of the greatest strengths of American higher education, and that engaged boards are essential for effective governance. So we work to ensure that trustees serve as guardians of both the financial and academic health of their institutions. America's students deserve a college education that is at once excellent and affordable, and ACTA prepares governing boards and university administrators to sustain this all-important balance. From trustee boardrooms to the offices of college presidents, from Capitol Hill to the White House, ACTA works to empower higher education stakeholders, helping them to establish effective accountability measures on campus that will decisively address the crushing burden of college costs. In 2018, many colleges and universities benefited from ACTA's guidance.

PROJECT ON ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

ACTA's Project on Administrative Costs reached unprecedented heights in 2018 as ACTA completed the first phase of a multi-year initiative to arm trustees and policymakers with the tools they need to confront the rising costs of a college education. Working closely with Jerry Malitz, former Chief Technology Officer and Webmaster at the National Center for Education Statistics and co-founder of the U.S. Department of Education's primary repository of postsecondary education data, ACTA built and launched **HowCollegesSpendMoney.com**, a web tool that allows users to analyze and compare 1,500 institutions on a variety of financial metrics and other indicators of quality and effectiveness.

ACTA developed the site over the course of the year, leading up to a National Press Club public launch event before a capacity audience. The event featured Principal Deputy Under Secretary Diane Auer Jones of the U.S. Department of Education, former U.S. Congressmen and former university regents Tom McMillen and Hal Daub, and Partners for College Affordability and Public Trust President James Toscano, along with ACTA's own Armand Alacbay, Vice President of Trustee & Government Affairs.

Made possible by a generous gift from the Arthur N. Rupe Foundation, the site empowers users to run trend reports on data including instructional and administrative spending, tuition as a percentage of median household income, and four-year graduation rates. Visitors can also use the "Cost Calculator" tool to estimate what the per-student cost would be for each new administrative staff position.

The launch of HowCollegesSpendMoney.com marks the culmination of a 10 year journey for ACTA, as the site incorporates the cost-effectiveness methodology ACTA originally designed for its first state report cards on public higher education, including *For the People* (2009) and *At a Crossroads* (2010), and leading up to 2017's *How Much is Too Much? Controlling Administrative Costs through Effective Oversight*, ACTA's first published report within the Project on Administrative Costs initiative. Since the Project's inception in 2016, over 80 colleges and universities have used ACTA's resources to investigate institutional spending.

ACCREDITATION ON THE EDGE

ACTA's unremitting work urging lawmakers to overhaul the accreditation system and replace it with a valid process of quality review is making powerful

advances and clearing pathways for accreditation reform. Throughout 2018, ACTA met with key legislative allies to educate them on the failures of accreditation to safeguard quality, and in July and November, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff provided expert testimony on accretitor overreach to the White House Office of American Innovation, led by senior advisor to the president Jared Kushner.

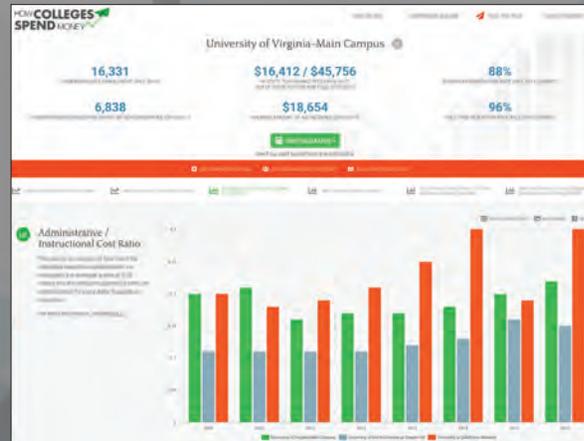
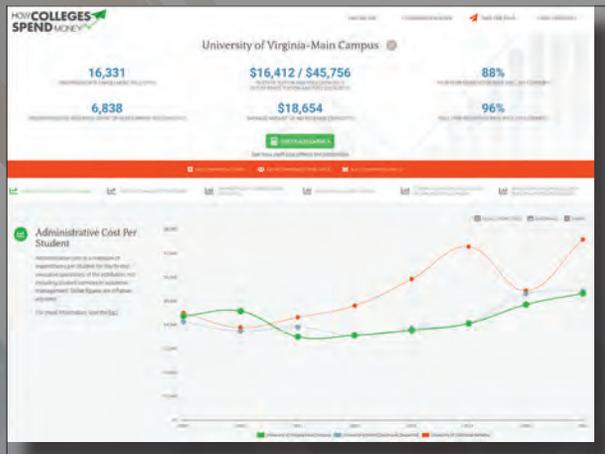
Alongside The Heritage Foundation, in 2018 ACTA also formed a diverse working group comprised of public policy organizations, legislative staff, and members of the higher education community in an effort to build broad consensus on the solutions that must be included in the next Higher Education Act reauthorization, including accreditation reform.

ACTA also secured a major victory to prevent what would have been an unprecedented escalation

of accretitor overreach and a damaging blow to religious liberty. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the body that authorizes access to federal student aid funds for colleges and universities in 19 states, backed off its proposal to eliminate the "institutional mission" exemption to its broad diversity and multiculturalism requirement, following a campaign led by ACTA. After Colorado Christian University President Donald W. Sweeting and ACTA President Michael Poliakoff co-authored an opinion editorial in the *Colorado Springs Gazette* calling attention to the proposed rule change, Dr. Poliakoff and a delegation of college and university presidents met with Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to reveal how the HLC's proposal would compromise the prerogative of faith-based institutions to operate in a manner consistent with their missions.

HowCollegesSpendMoney.com

ACTA launches a groundbreaking online resource to help higher education leaders and governing boards confront the exploding costs of college.

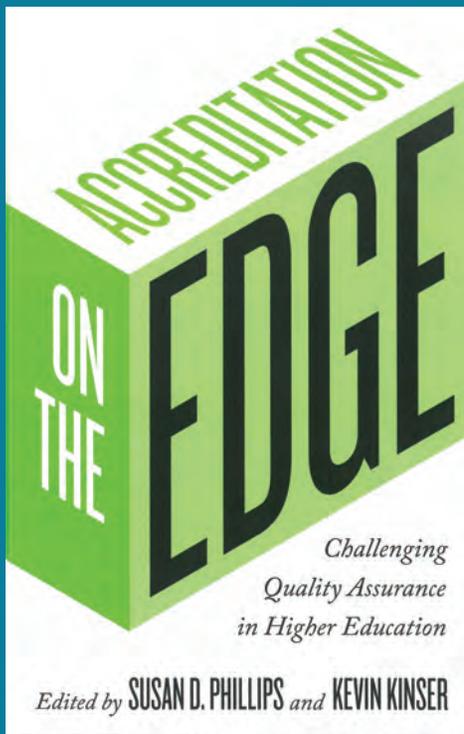


Forbes

ACTA's HowCollegesSpendMoney: New, Advanced Tool For Accountability, February 14, 2019

“ACTA has launched a new web-based tool that makes it easier to track and compare college expenditures. . . . it promises to be an invaluable, user-friendly, source of information that will allow higher education leaders,

students and policy makers to evaluate and compare institutions' performance on financial matters as well as to examine the relationship of spending to student outcomes.”



A new book on accreditation, published by Johns Hopkins University Press, features an essay by ACTA's Senior Fellow Anne D. Neal and Vice President of Trustee & Government Affairs, Armand Alacbay.

In mid-2018, Johns Hopkins University Press published *Accreditation on the Edge: Challenging Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, an anthology of essays from national higher education leaders, including ACTA Senior Fellow Anne D. Neal and Vice President of Trustee & Government Affairs Armand Alacbay. In the fall, ACTA hosted a panel discussion on accreditation reform on Capitol Hill, featuring fellow book contributor Barmak Nassirian of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, as well as Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, president emeritus of George Washington University; Mary Clare Amselem of The Heritage Foundation; and Amy Laitinen of New America. The event was attended by more than 50 congressional staffers and representatives from other policy organizations.

INSIDE THE WALLS

In 2018, ACTA continued to expand its role as a go-to authority for higher education leaders seeking to implement measures to improve cost-effectiveness and board oversight. A private liberal arts university in the Northeast commissioned ACTA in early 2018 to perform a comprehensive review

of its spending patterns. ACTA's analysis uncovered numerous instances of duplicative units throughout the university, and identified opportunities for the university to strengthen its academic departments and reduce costs through academic restructuring. Elsewhere across the country, ACTA counseled trustees on issues ranging from presidential searches to general education—at institutions ranging from state flagship universities to small private colleges. In June, ACTA introduced its Board Services program, offered through ACTA's Institute for Effective Governance (IEG), providing trustees with yet another new resource on issues such as strategic planning and board development.

At the state level, the Utah Legislative Auditor General featured ACTA's recommendations for best practices in university governance in his report to the state legislature that examined oversight practices at the University of Utah and Utah State University. And when lawmakers in Tennessee restructured the University of Tennessee's governing board with the passage of the state's FOCUS Act, ACTA's *Governance for a New Era* report was at the center of the new trustees' orientation program.



[One of the] largest issues in [higher education] is cost . . . Where are the billions going? . . . The system is very opaque. It takes a long time to farrow this stuff out. So I'm very pleased to have worked with ACTA in the past because they're a real tremendous asset in answering these questions.

—Douglas Belkin, Higher Education Reporter, *Wall Street Journal*
remarks at ACTA's ATHENA Roundtable

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Equipping Students

The original idea of a liberal arts education was one that would provide the knowledge a free citizen requires. Centuries later, the importance of a broad-based general education has never been greater. ACTA believes that the mission of higher education is to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need for the challenges of career and community. So we work to promote the value of a liberal arts education, grounded in the foundational arts and sciences, as quintessential to success in a dynamic, global economy and to engaged, informed citizenship. ACTA has spent over two decades knocking on the doors of colleges and universities, urging them to pare down bloated, chaotic curricula and scale up the rigor of their academic standards. In 2018, we persuaded more campus leaders than ever before to take up our challenge.

WHAT ARE STUDENTS LEARNING?

2018 marks the tenth anniversary of ACTA's *What Will They Learn?*[®] project, which has grown each year, urging more and more institutions to lay the foundations for a truly high-caliber education for America's college students. ACTA's website **WhatWillTheyLearn.com** and its accompanying report *What Will They Learn?* (WWTL) provide the only college rating system that evaluates over 1,120 major public and private institutions based on the quality of their academic programs, rather than on their reputations or the size of their endowments. Schools earn our prestigious "A" ranking by requiring of every undergraduate at least six of the seven core liberal arts subjects—Composition, Literature, (intermediate-level) Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural Science.

In 2018, ACTA's persistent work to bring academic rigor back to the center of higher education paid off. Traffic to **WhatWillTheyLearn.com** increased by 30% in 2018, while the number of new users increased by 54%, and a surge of institutions across the country sent ACTA over 200 requests for more copies of our 2018–19 *What Will They Learn?* report. Twenty-four schools reached out to us for more information on our report and recommendations on improving their WWTL grades, while 25 additional schools strengthened their core requirements.

Our campaign to help campuses build strong academic programs is no small triumph. Schools that earn top ratings from ACTA enhance their reputations and motivate other colleges and universities to raise the bar in order to

compete. The benefits of this competition are powerful: With each college and university that implements a stronger core curriculum, ACTA ensures that thousands more students graduate with knowledge and competencies that will help them stand out to prospective employers and prepare them to engage in lifelong intellectual growth.

COLLEGE BOUND

Prospective college students and their parents are increasingly searching for institutions that provide real academic value in return for the dollars received. So ACTA is working to put our *What Will They Learn?* resource directly into the hands of parents and students so that they can make better choices. In 2018, ACTA completed its database of nearly 50,000 high school counselors, who represent virtually every public and private high

school in the United States. This project represents a momentous milestone in ACTA's work to connect high school seniors to colleges and universities that demonstrate clear standards of excellence. With ACTA's college search tools in the offices of high school counselors, students and their parents will now be able to navigate the college selection process armed with powerful information about the academic performance of schools across the country.

Our pilot outreach to 5,000 counselors generated enormous interest, with counselors from 150 high schools reaching out to ACTA for information and support. In 2018, we interacted with hundreds of high school counselors and distributed nearly 300 copies of our publications on academic excellence and academic freedom at the Michigan School Counselor Association Conference, the Virginia

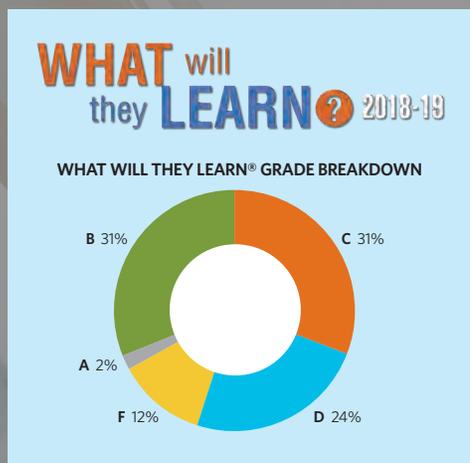
School Counselor Association Conference, and the Association of Classical Christian Schools Conference. We look forward to ramping up engagement with this new, powerful base in 2019.

FUND FOR ACADEMIC RENEWAL

ACTA believes that targeted giving by informed alumni has a significant role in creating excellent collegiate programs and institutions. The process is often difficult to navigate, however, and it can be challenging for prospective donors to identify worthy recipients. That's why ACTA created the Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR), a vital resource for college donors and collegiate programs seeking to uphold the liberal arts, demand high academic standards, encourage intellectual diversity, and protect academic freedom.

WhatWillTheyLearn.com

In 2018, ACTA released the 10th edition of *What Will They Learn?*, the only college rating system that evaluates institutions based on the quality of their academic programs.



You Can Do Practically Anything . . .

... with a good liberal arts foundation! Leaders in business, politics, and professional life uniformly praise college students who pursue a strong core foundation of courses in the basics of literature and composition, math and science, history and economics. The liberal arts can sharpen your thinking and deepen the skills you need in the workplace.

THE STATISTICS TELL THE STORY.

- ✓ **Writing Proficiency**
44% of managers think graduating college seniors lack writing proficiency. Taking one or more courses in composition, creative writing, and one-on-one instruction with the professor is essential.
- ✓ **Mathematics Skills**
19% of managers do not think recent college graduates have basic mathematics skills. Take a math course above intermediate algebra to train your mind how to think analytically.
- ✓ **Critical Thinking**
60% of managers think graduating college seniors lack problem solving and critical thinking skills. These skills can be found in many courses such as literature, economics, psychology, philosophy, history, mathematics, and science. Analyzing facts, numbers, events, and people will help springboard career success.
- ✓ **Adaptability to Diverse Ideas**
Employees think college graduates are not willing to adapt to other viewpoints. The workplace is full of differing ideas and opinions. Learning how to listen and have constructive conversations will establish a harmonious workplace environment.
- ✓ **Overall Preparedness**
Only 50% of managers think recent college graduates are prepared for the workforce. Learning how to learn and to adapt to diverse situations are two skills that will set students apart from their peers.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Students can hone these skills by taking college courses in composition, literature, foreign language, economics, mathematics, and science. A liberal arts degree teaches you how to learn, listen, think, analyze, and grow. And it prepares you for success in your career and community.

Notes from "What Will They Learn? Research Report" (November 2018) <http://www.whatwilltheylearn.com/research-report> and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

For more information, visit whatwilltheylearn.com. **WHAT will they LEARN?**

In 2018, ACTA developed informational material for high school students on the value of a liberal arts education. We plan to distribute this, along with *What Will They Learn?*, to our new database of nearly 50,000 high school counselors across the country.

THE CHRONICLE
of Higher Education

Crisis in Civic Education
Michael Poliakoff, October 10, 2018

“Only 17.1% of American colleges and universities require their students to take a basic course in U.S. government or history, and only 3.2% require a foundational economics course. . . . What excuse is there for only 45% of Americans knowing that

Neil Gorsuch is a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, or the 53% who did not know that Robert Mueller is special counsel for the U.S. Department of Justice? And yes, a shockingly high percentage of the ignorant are college grads.”

In 2018, FAR offered services to donors that helped them articulate their philanthropic goals, locate meritorious programs that align with their philanthropic aims, structure gifts to preserve their intent, and navigate the college giving process from beginning to end. To maximize the impact of donors' gifts, FAR has been able to offer these services at no cost thanks to a generous grant from the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation.

FAR helped individuals and organizations establish an endowed chair at their alma mater worth \$4.5 million once fully funded; plan a scholarship program that will provide academic and personal coaching as well as full financial support for 10 low-income students at a private liberal arts university; and structure a \$1 million naming rights gift, part of a \$15 million capital campaign. Since 2016, FAR has helped donors to plan higher education gifts totaling more than \$18 million.

FAR's expert advice on effective giving was published by high-profile philanthropy and higher education publications including *Philanthropy Magazine*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the Library of Law and Liberty, The Heritage Foundation's *Insider* magazine, and the DonorsTrust Intentional Giving Blog. FAR also expanded its digital and print communications by

inaugurating a quarterly newsletter, the *College Donor Quarterly*, and a bi-monthly blog, the *College Donor Digest*.

In 2018, FAR sponsored the addition of many new excellent programs and centers to ACTA's **Oases of Excellence** initiative, a nationwide network of 67 high-quality college programs that promote the study of American history, Western Civilization, political theory, economics, capitalism, leadership, and the Great Books.

Building off the success of the inaugural Oases of Excellence conference in 2017, ACTA's Fund for Academic Renewal hosted two faculty conferences this year. These invitation-only events brought together leaders of top-quality campus institutes and programs within the liberal arts tradition to discuss how they can promote debate, engage undergraduates in extracurricular programming, and create a student community. In June, faculty convened at the Center for Innovation at American University, where they focused on improving their digital and print communications. And in September, ACTA traveled to Arizona State University's School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership for workshops with faculty leaders on fundraising and donor cultivation strategies.



I am impressed with the breadth of ACTA activities and the great things you and your staff are doing for higher education. It was helpful for us to learn more about the What Will They Learn?[®] initiative, and we are already working on addressing the issues we covered during our meeting.

—Bill C. Hardgrave, Provost and Senior Vice President, Auburn University



Dr. Paul Carrese, founding director of the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University, speaks on how to grow an effective program at the fall 2018 Oases of Excellence conference.



Dr. Siri Terjesen, Director of the Center for Innovation at American University, addresses the group of faculty leaders at the 2018 spring Oases of Excellence Conference.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Transforming Campus Culture

ACTA believes that rational debate and the free exchange of ideas are the lifeblood of a vibrant democracy, and that the college campus traditionally has been the intellectual heart of American life—a place for students, professors, and the community to come together across ideological divides in the pursuit of truth. However, more and more colleges and universities have seen increases in polarization and the suppression of free speech that threaten to erode this tradition of free expression. In 2018, ACTA worked to restore a culture at our nation’s higher education institutions that fosters the First Amendment and actively advances open dialogue for every member of the campus community—students, faculty, and invited speakers.

HEARTS AND MINDS

For higher education’s most important foundational principles to flourish, institutional leadership must take the lead to promote a campus environment in which students enjoy the freedom to speak, hear, and explore complex ideas—ideas that challenge their familiar assumptions. In 2018, ACTA partnered with two eminent scholars to publish several guides to help trustees do exactly that. And institutions across the country—from the California State University System to Miami University (OH), among many others—have started using these resources as part of board and presidential training on this critical concern. Several institutions sought ACTA’s counsel on such issues as how to respond to campus movements that threaten academic freedom, and how to keep the heckler’s veto from silencing invited speakers.

In *Campus Intolerance, Then & Now*, Guenter Lewy, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, analyzes the ideological underpinnings of the current crisis to help trustees better understand and address a campus climate in which mere ideas are considered offensive and dangerous. In *Building a Culture of Free Expression on the American College Campus: Challenges & Solutions*, Joyce Lee Malcolm, Patrick Henry Professor of Constitutional Law and the Second Amendment at the Antonin Scalia Law School of George Mason University, discusses how trustees can combat the repressive effects of speech codes, safe spaces, and trigger warnings and ensure that their institutions are sanctuaries of free inquiry. In conjunction with this report, ACTA also distributed a wallet-sized reference card for trustees with 10 questions to guide them toward developing strong free speech policies, establishing procedures to respond to campus disruptions, and defining appropriate boundaries for responsible dissent. In *Guarding the Freedom to Speak, Freedom to Hear*—praised by both Heterodox Academy and The Brookings

Institution—Dr. Malcolm seeks to educate trustees about the legal and ethical problems that the “heckler’s veto” and disinvitations cause, and offers clear guidelines to help trustees cultivate a campus climate where free speech can thrive.

FROM THE GROUND UP

Together with on-campus partners and other like-minded organizations, ACTA fostered civil engagement at America’s colleges and universities through promoting parliamentary-style student debates that trained students and community

members to engage diverse perspectives respectfully rather than attempting to shut down ideas with which they disagree. The civil yet spirited tone of argumentation inspired student groups with the confidence to continue holding monthly discussions on controversial topics.

ACTA accompanied student-level mobilization with top-down change by trustees. In 2018, we enjoined institutions across the country to affirm the Chicago Principles of Freedom of Expression. To date, 58 institutions have adopted the Chicago Principles or similar statements, and almost half did so with

ACTA’s encouragement and support, including the University of North Carolina, the University of Colorado, and the University of Nebraska.

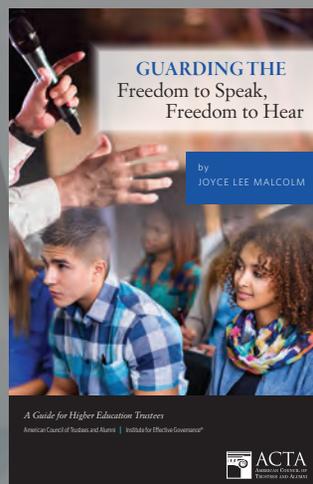
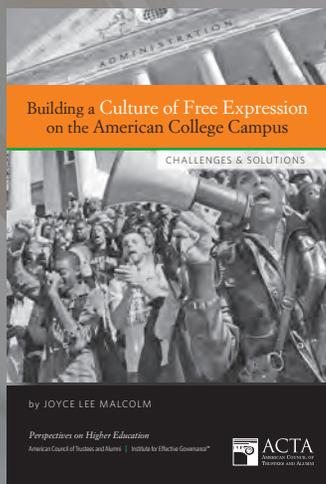
With each university that places free expression at the forefront of its mission, more institutions are influenced to follow suit. The adoption of the Chicago Principles represents a defining moment for America’s institutions to transform their campus cultures by prioritizing and protecting free speech; ACTA is immensely proud that we have prompted so many institutions to take on this challenge and emerge on the side of the open and free exchange of ideas.



We have the best university system in the world, but it is threatened by the narrowing of thought on these campuses. But for ACTA, it would be far worse. I commend you for the work you do. I hope you will stay the course and continue to provide the environment for freedom of expression on every campus in the United States

—The Honorable Jeb Bush

SPEAKING UP ACTA published a range of resources in 2018 to help trustees grapple with issues of free expression on campus.



National Reach

Informing the Public Conversation

When higher education leaders, trustees, and policymakers need advice, they contact ACTA. This is because ACTA speaks out on the most pressing challenges facing colleges and universities, no matter how complex or controversial. Our voice in the media provides a consistent, fair, and powerful message that resonates nationwide. In 2018, ACTA made 662 media appearances in print, broadcast, and online, and our commentary was featured in news journals across the country, from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to the *New York Times* to the *Los Angeles Times*.

National news outlets, higher education journalists, and concerned policymakers turned to ACTA for our expertise on the tough issues that made headlines in 2018, including board governance at Michigan State University, the University of Maryland–College Park athletics controversy, and the presidential search at the University of Minnesota. Media outlets in 44 states spotlighted ACTA's commentary, and we provided major hits for leading newspapers including the *Detroit Free Press*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *The Oklahoman*, and the *Austin American-Statesman*.

In just a single year, our Facebook following increased by 174.8%. And ACTA's blog, websites, and podcasts featuring insights on higher education continued to rise in popularity. Visits to ACTA's blog, **The Forum**, more than doubled in 2018, and the number of unique visits to our multimedia pages increased 71.8%. ACTA's new campaign to showcase the best of the best in college leadership took off with a powerful video series featuring trustees and university presidents. These videos gained numerous impressions, likes, and comments from our robust community of Facebook followers.

Higher Ed Now, ACTA's podcast, was downloaded over 4,000 times in 2018, and continued to produce incisive commentary on the challenges facing our colleges and universities. The podcast welcomed a host of both storied and new higher education reformers, including president emerita of the University of Chicago, Hanna Holborn Gray; Mona Charen, senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center; David Bruce Smith, founder of the Grateful American Foundation; Fred Beuttler, Associate Dean of the University of Chicago's Graham School; Jonathan Rauch, Senior Fellow at The Brookings Institution; and Michael Horn, co-founder and fellow at the Clayton Christensen Institute.

REACHING THE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY

Trustees. Our growing network includes trustees from nearly every four-year institution across the country offering a liberal arts degree. We continue to offer guidance and support and reach over 23,000 trustees at nearly 1,300 institutions.

Alumni. Our quarterly newsletter *Inside Academe* reaches more than 13,000 alumni from a wide range of colleges and universities. And over 3,000 alumni receive our monthly eNewsletters as well as email updates about our latest initiatives, events, and achievements.

Governors and Policymakers. ACTA regularly reaches out to all 50 governors and their education policy staffs, as well as to many state policymakers and legislators.

ATHENA ROUNDTABLE

ACTA's 2018 ATHENA Roundtable conference was one of our most powerful events ever. At our 14th annual conference, 130 trustees, stakeholders, and civic-minded students were drawn to three compelling panels that offered not only valuable insights on the challenges facing higher education, but also the most effective ways that we can address these problems to keep our colleges and universities at the top.

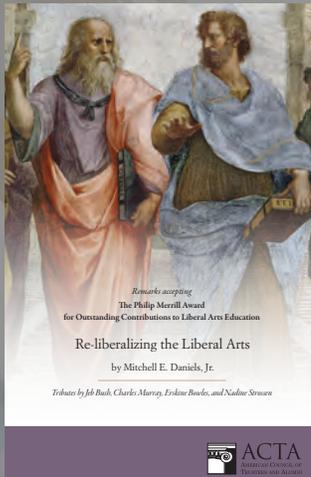
Our academic freedom panel focused on how college leaders can build a culture of free expression on campus. Panelists included Nadine Strossen, former president of the ACLU; Eugene Volokh, professor of law at UCLA; Paul Levy, former trustee of the University of Pennsylvania; and April Lawson, architect of the parliamentary-style debates

brought by Better Angels to campuses nationwide. The panelists all agreed that the problem of polarization on campus can only be solved through coming together across political divides to defend free speech: Without it, we all lose.

The second panel explored the enormous impact trustees and administrators can make at their universities by lowering costs. Arizona State University Provost Mark Searle and University of Hawaii trustee Jan Sullivan shared the cost-cutting measures they implemented at their institutions: They showed that making college more affordable is neither impossible nor painful. Former University of Colorado System President Hank Brown and ACTA Vice President of Trustee & Government Affairs Armand Alacbay walked attendees through the key steps that higher education leaders must take to provide a college education that doesn't break

2018 MERRILL AWARD

ACTA presented our 2018 Merrill Award to Purdue University President Mitchell E. Daniels for his ardent defense of free speech and his innovative leadership.



President Daniels wowed the audience at the 2018 Merrill Award Gala with stunning acceptance remarks that served as a paean to the transformative nature of the liberal arts when studied rigorously and in an atmosphere where the robust clash of ideas is allowed to flourish.

ACTA distributed the published speech to over 23,000 trustees across the country.



Through the generous support of our donors, ACTA sponsors students at our annual ATHENA Roundtable event and Merrill Award Gala. Several of the students gathered around President Daniels to continue the conversation.



ACTA awarded the Jerry L. Martin Prize for Excellence in College Trusteeship to Paul Levy, former trustee of the University of Pennsylvania and former member of the Penn Law School's Board of Overseers, for his courage in taking a principled stand for academic freedom.

the bank, including reforming the accreditation system and pressuring institutions to redirect their administrative spending toward academics.

Our third panel captured the audience's attention with a passionate discussion on how higher education donors can make a difference with their wallets. Philanthropy experts Erin Hogan and Andy Carroll discussed ways that donors can take advantage of tax rules and innovative giving funds to get the most bang for their buck, while NEH grant recipient Elizabeth Kaufer Busch and FAR Executive Director Jacquie Pfeffer Merrill explained how instrumental donor dollars are in creating academic centers on campus that prepare students for strong careers and informed citizenship.

AWARDING LEADERSHIP

ACTA conferred not one, but two awards this year, honoring two individuals whose innovations and principled leadership put pressure on institutions to hold true to the high calling of the university. We awarded the **Jerry L. Martin Prize for Excellence in College Trusteeship** to **Paul Levy**, former trustee of the University of Pennsylvania and former member of the Penn Law School's Board of Overseers. Mr. Levy inspired many with his courageous defense

of Penn Professor Amy Wax after the university sanctioned her for expressing opinions that ran counter to campus orthodoxy. In his remarks entitled *The Centre Cannot Hold: Reclaiming the Ethics of Higher Learning*, Mr. Levy called upon college trustees to stand as the first line of defense to protect academic freedom on campus.

We honored former governor and Purdue University President **Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.**, with the **Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education**. His indefatigable commitment to innovation and excellence in higher education was commemorated with moving tributes by former ACLU president Nadine Strossen, former governor Jeb Bush, scholar and author Charles Murray, and former University of North Carolina System president Erskine Bowles. Under President Daniels's leadership, Purdue has maintained a tuition freeze since 2013, reduced room and board costs, and decreased the overall cost of attendance. In his thought-provoking acceptance speech, *Re-liberalizing the Liberal Arts*, President Daniels shared how Purdue has achieved all this while simultaneously expanding a rigorous liberal arts curriculum and training students to uphold free speech and pursue intellectual inquiry.



If you care about your school, if you care about our country, demand that some version of the Chicago Principles be adopted. There is simply no room in American life for the suppression of thought and speech. Nothing less is acceptable.

—Paul Levy, Managing Director/Founder, JLL Partners, Inc.

2018 ATHENA ROUNDTABLE and MERRILL AWARD GALA



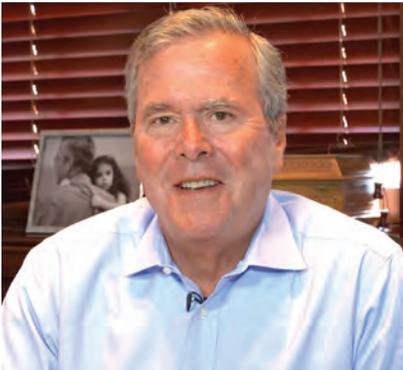
Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill, Elizabeth Kaufer Busch, Andy Carroll, Erin Hogan, and Janet Lorin



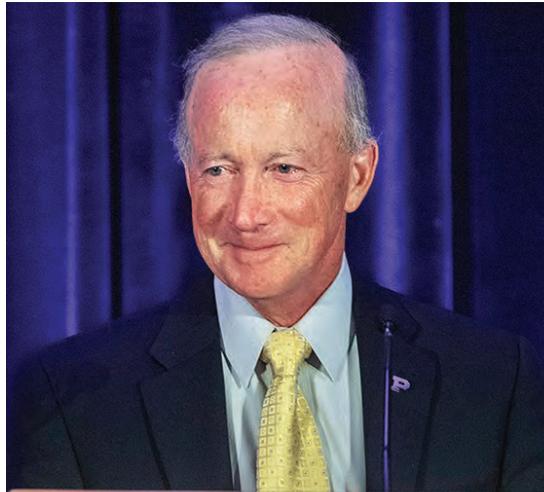
Douglas Belkin



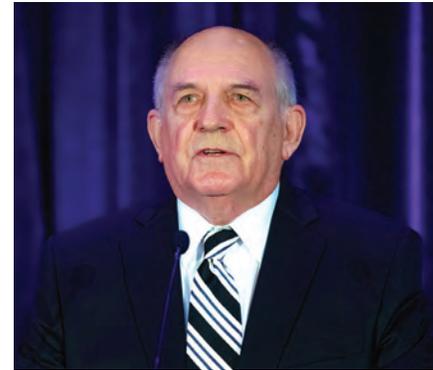
Armand Alacbay and Mark Searle



Jeb Bush



Mitch Daniels



Charles Murray



Jan Sullivan



Nadine Strossen



Erskine Bowles



Hank Brown

WHO WE ARE

OUR STAFF

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.
President

Lauri Kempson
Senior Vice President

Armand Alacbay, Esq.
Vice President of Trustee & Government Affairs

Michael Deshaies
Vice President of Development & Strategic Partnerships

Doug Sprei
Director of Communications

Megan Riethmiller
Director of Curricular Improvement

Nick Barden
Administrative Director

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Elliott Cole
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Joe DeGraff
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Greta Wagley
Research Associate / Editor

Ian Cook
Program Associate for Trustee & Government Affairs

Erik Gross
Program Associate for Communications

Marina Herrera
Program Associate for Development

Leslie Deshaies
Executive Assistant

SENIOR FELLOW ANNE D. NEAL

ACTA continues to benefit from the expertise of our senior fellow, Anne Neal. Ms. Neal is a co-founder of ACTA and served as our president from 2003 to 2016. Her work on higher education reform, particularly on accreditation as a member of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, is destined to change significantly the system of quality assurance in higher education. We were honored to feature her vast insight at our 2017 ATHENA Roundtable conference on a panel devoted to developing greater accountability in college and university governance.

INTERNS AND LEWIT FELLOWS

ACTA's internship program offers a unique educational experience to talented college students and recent

graduates. Our spring and summer interns perform critical research on the What Will They Learn?[®] project as well as other key research and writing tasks, including the development of our new guidance counselor database. The Robert Lewit Fellowship in Education Policy offers select students the opportunity to engage in special assignments. Interns and fellows are treated to a summer speaker series, in which eminent scholars discuss important topics in higher education. This year's interns met with American novelist and critic Thomas Mallon and Jerry Malitz, former chief information technology officer of the Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences. The intern team

also enjoyed visits to George Washington's home at Mount Vernon and President Lincoln's Cottage.

DONORS AND DONOR SOCIETIES

The generosity of ACTA's many supporters empowers us to do our important work, and because we do not receive government funding, it enables us to maintain our intellectual independence. Members of ACTA's donor societies are invited to exclusive events throughout the year, where they meet important and influential scholars and leaders of higher education reform. We appreciate these opportunities to get to know our donor society members and to hear their ideas about the future of American higher education.

In September, more than 30 concerned leaders and ACTA friends met at the Union Club in New York City to discuss the threats to higher education and ACTA's vision for the future. Special guest Paul Levy, former University of Pennsylvania trustee, spoke about the importance of protecting intellectual diversity in the academy. Attendees were empowered to make a difference themselves through responsible board membership and directing their philanthropy to institutions that uphold high standards and defend free expression.

ACTA regularly hosts events featuring prominent leaders in higher education for our supporters who make our important work possible.



Working alongside individuals who are committed to improving our nation's higher education system has not only been rewarding, but has allowed me to grow intellectually and professionally.

—Caitlin Patrick, ACTA What Will They Learn?[®] Intern

ACTA ON THE ROAD



ACTA's summer interns visit Lincoln's Cottage. Our summer intern program includes a stimulating lecture series and excursions to historical sites.



ACTA friend Stanley Stillman once again hosted ACTA at the Union Club in NYC for a special donor salon on the importance of academic freedom. 2018 Martin Prize winner Paul Levy and Michael Poliakoff led a discussion with the 30+ attendees.

2018 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as of December 31, 2018

Assets

Cash/Cash Equivalents (unrestricted)	\$2,844,739
Cash/Cash Equivalents (restricted)	10,000
Marketable Securities	1,786,510
CDs (unrestricted)	245,128
CDs (restricted) - FAR	1,081,093
Receivables	58,691
Prepayments/Other Assets	44,711
Property/Equipment (Net)	<u>409,203</u>

Total Assets **6,480,075**

Liabilities & Net Assets

Accounts Payable	89,245
Deferred Rent	<u>250,394</u>

Total Liabilities **339,639**

Unrestricted Net Assets	5,049,344
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	<u>1,091,092</u>

Total Net Assets **6,140,436**

Total Liabilities & Net Assets **\$6,480,075**

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES as of December 31, 2018

Revenue & Support

Contributions/Grants (unrestricted)	\$2,146,033
Grants (restricted)	
<i>Fund for Academic Renewal</i>	907,625
<i>Other</i>	123,750
Interest & Dividends	52,871
Miscellaneous Income	33,969
Realized/Unrealized Gains	<u>87,985</u>

Total Revenue & Support **3,352,233**

Expenses

Programs	3,020,841
Fundraising	30,392
Management/General	<u>197,822</u>

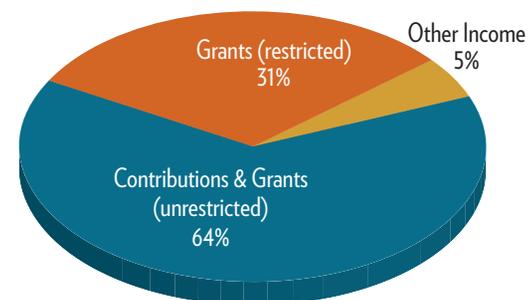
Total Expenses **3,249,055**

Change in Net Assets **103,178**

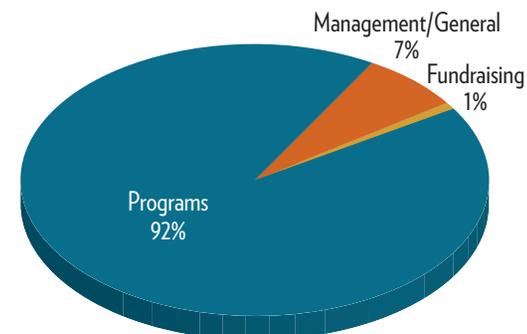
Net Assets, beginning of year **6,037,258**

Net Assets, end of year **\$6,140,436**

2018 OPERATING REVENUE



2018 OPERATING EXPENSES



ACTA depends on individuals and foundations for support. We thank you, our partners, for your generosity and your dedication to the promise of higher education and the restoration of confidence in its effectiveness.



IN MEMORIAM

Roger Beckett

Bruce Cole

Eugene Grant

Roger Haskell

Franklin "Pepper" Laughon

Herbert London

Robert Malott

Senator John McCain



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