

# Inside Academe

Summer 2000, Vol. V, No. 4

American Council of Trustees and Alumni

## Lightning Strikes at ACTA



Cheney and Lieberman launch ACTA, March 1995

Vice Presidential selections rarely cause a stir in the higher education community. Not so this year, when George Bush announced Dick Cheney and Al Gore picked Joe Lieberman for the Number Two positions. The announcements guaranteed a spotlight on ACTA's operations since Lynne Cheney is ACTA's National Chairman and Lieberman serves as a member of its National Council.

Over the years, both Cheney and Lieberman have been strong supporters of improved academic standards and greater accountability in the higher education community -- issues that inspire ACTA's activities.

The increasing prominence of ACTA leaders bodes well for the future of the higher education debate. ■

## Governor: ACTA at "Cutting Edge"

Active vs. passive. Those are the two schools of thought when it comes to college trustees. ACTA, of course, is leading the charge in favor of active trusteeship, and publicly going head-to-head with such organizations as the Association of Governing Boards which typically favor the status quo.

*continued on page 2*

## Congress Tells Universities-- Strengthen American History

Unanimous. Yes, unanimous. At a time when unity is rare on Capitol Hill, members from both parties and from both House and Senate unanimously approved last month a concurrent resolution expressing "the sense of Congress regarding the importance and value of United States history" and calling on boards of trustees, college administrators, and state officials everywhere to strengthen American history requirements.

ACTA literally made "front-page" news across the country in the wake of a televised press conference on June 27 publicizing ACTA's eye-opening report, "Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century" and announcing introduction of the Concurrent Resolution. With

the United States Capitol as a backdrop, ACTA advisor Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (D-CT), Sen. Slade Gorton (R-WA), Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA) announced introduction of the resolution and called attention to the profound historical illiteracy identified in the report.

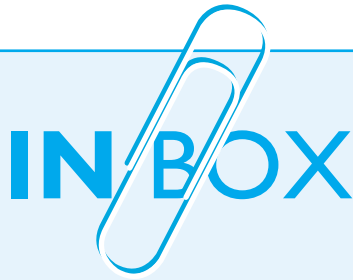
Citing the ACTA study, which found that 81% of seniors at top-rated colleges received a D or an F on high school level American history questions, Lieberman stated that the historical illiteracy of America's college graduates is a serious national problem that should be addressed by the country's higher education community.

"When we lose the memory of our past, when we lose our understanding of the remark-

*continued on page 7*



Rep. Tom Petri, Jerry Martin, Anne Neal, Paul Reber and Sen. Joe Lieberman



**De Teel Patterson Tiller**  
**Deputy Associate Director**  
**Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships**  
**United State Department of the Interior**

“Thank you so much for sending the report, *Losing America’s Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century*. ... This is a topic of keen interest to the National Park Service. ... Bravo to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni for taking on this important topic!”

**Marc Berley, President**  
**Foundation for Academic Standards & Tradition**  
**New York, New York**

“Congratulations on the survey. The coverage has been amazing.”

**Edwin J. Feulner**  
**President, The Heritage Foundation**  
**Trustee, George Mason University**  
**Washington, D.C.**

“I just wanted to add my own thanks to those of [board chairman] Ed Meese and others for all of your help on the American history and Western civilization requirements. As you know, we relied heavily on ACTA during this effort, and we are grateful to you ... for your continuing support.”

**Jane H. Fraser**  
**Stuttering Foundation**  
**Memphis, TN**

“Keep up the great work.”

**Professor Jay Bergmann**  
**Professor of History**  
**Central Connecticut State University**  
**New Britain, CT**

“I’m writing simply to tell you how grateful I am for your mention in your latest newsletter ... of the UConn poll and its regrettable aftermath. [ACTA *Defends Roper for Politically Incorrect Survey*]. It is essential that news of this outrageous attempt to stifle speech spread as widely as possible.”

**Editor’s Note:** We understand that University of Connecticut Interim Chancellor Fred Maryanski who demanded investigation of practices at the UConn Research Center no longer serves as Interim Chancellor.

**Oscar Handlin**  
**University Professor Emeritus**  
**Harvard University**  
**Cambridge, MA**

“Ignorance of the American past is not a new or sudden development. Nor does it emanate from transient currents. The rot set in decades ago among the teachers of today’s teachers and among text book writers who acquired and spread a distorted view of the country’s history. In an address to the national meeting of the American Historical Association in 1970 I warned unavailingly of the fog obscuring our understanding of the development of the United States. I then pointed the finger not at any political or ideological conspiracy, but rather at the erosion of knowledge and skills in the culture increasingly dominated by sensate impulses. The intervening decades have amply confirmed the validity of those warnings.”

## Governor: ACTA at “Cutting Edge”

*continued from page 1*

In a recent article, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* featured the ongoing debate between ACTA and AGB. Reading the report, Michigan Governor John Engler responded with a Letter to the Editor praising ACTA’s efforts:

Dear Editor:

I would like to commend the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for airing the debate between “two distinct schools of thought on college trusteeship” (May 12, 2000).

The old philosophy is that boards should be relatively passive. The new philosophy is that boards should be active and responsible representatives of the public inter-

est. Certainly the new philosophy has guided my selection of trustees overseeing Michigan’s public universities.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, which you mention in your coverage, is at the cutting edge of the new philosophy. At a time when the public is demanding greater accountability, higher quality, and lower costs, it is up to trustees to make sure their colleges and universities are responsive to these public concerns. I am confident that, if trustees do their part, higher education will respond.

Sincerely,  
John Engler  
Governor, State of Michigan

# LOSING AMERICA'S MEMORY:

## A Special Section of *Inside Academe*

### S. CON. RES. 129

*Passed unanimously, United States House of Representatives, July 10, 2000*

*Passed unanimously, United States Senate, June 30, 2000*

Whereas basic knowledge of United States history is essential to full and informed participation in civic life and to the larger vibrancy of the American experiment in self-government;

Whereas basic knowledge of the past serves as a civic glue, binding together a diverse people into a single Nation with a common purpose;

Whereas citizens who lack knowledge of United States history will also lack an understanding and appreciation of the democratic principles that define and sustain the Nation as a free people, such as liberty, justice, tolerance, government by the consent of the governed, and equality under the law;

Whereas a recent Roper survey done for the American Council of Trustees and Alumni reveals that the next generation of American leaders and citizens is in danger of losing America's civic memory;

Whereas the Roper survey found that 81 percent of seniors at elite colleges and universities could not answer basic high school level questions concerning United States history, that scarcely more than half knew general information about American democracy and the Constitution, and that only 22 percent could identify the source of the most famous line of the Gettysburg address;

Whereas many of the Nation's colleges and universities no longer require United States history as a prerequisite to graduation, including 100 percent of the top institutions of higher education;

Whereas 78 percent of the Nation's top colleges and universities no longer require the study of any form of history;

Whereas America's colleges and universities are leading bellwethers of national priorities and values, setting standards for the whole of the United States' education system and sending signals to students, teachers, parents, and public schools about what every educated citizen in a democracy must know;

Whereas many of America's most distinguished historians and intellectuals have expressed alarm about the growing historical illiteracy of college and university graduates and the consequences for the Nation; and

Whereas the distinguished historians and intellectuals fear that without a common civic memory and a common understanding of the remarkable individuals, events, and ideals that have shaped the Nation, people in the United States risk losing much of what it means to be an American, as well as the ability to fulfill the fundamental responsibilities of citizens in a democracy: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that --

(1) the historical illiteracy of America's college and university graduates is a serious problem that should be addressed by the Nation's higher education community;

(2) boards of trustees and administrators at institutions of higher education in the United States should review their curricula and add requirements in United States history;

(3) State officials responsible for higher education should review public college and university curricula in their States and promote requirements in United States history;

(4) parents should encourage their children to select institutions of higher education with substantial history requirements and students should take courses in United States history whether required or not; and

(5) history teachers and educators at all levels should redouble their efforts to bolster the knowledge of United States history among students of all ages and to restore the vitality of America's civic memory.

# It's Test Time: Do You Know More

Want to test your knowledge of American history? Here are the 34 questions which were asked of elite college seniors by the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut as part of ACTA's report *Losing America's Memory*. Eighty-one percent received a D or an F.

The answers are located at the end.

Q1. When was the Civil War?

- a. 1750-1800
- b. 1800-1850
- c. 1850-1900
- d. 1900-1950
- e. after 1950

Q2. Who said "Give me liberty or give me death?"

- a. John Hancock
- b. James Madison
- c. Patrick Henry
- d. Samuel Adams

Q3. What is the Magna Carta?

- a. The foundation of the British parliamentary system
- b. The Great Seal of the monarchs of England
- c. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man
- d. The charter signed by the Pilgrims on the Mayflower

Q4. The term "Reconstruction" refers to:

- a. Payment of European countries' debts to the United States after the First World War
- b. Repairing of the physical damage caused by the Civil War
- c. Readmission of the Confederate states and the protection of the rights of Black citizens
- d. Rebuilding of the transcontinental railroad and the canal system

Q5. Are Beavis and Butthead...

- a. A radio show
- b. Television cartoon characters
- c. A musical group
- d. Fictional soldiers

Q6. The Scopes Trial was about:

- a. Freedom of the press
- b. Teaching evolution in the schools
- c. Prayer in the schools
- d. Education in private schools

Q7. The Emancipation Proclamation issued by Lincoln stated that:

- a. Slaves were free in areas of the Confederate states not held by the Union
- b. The slave trade was illegal
- c. Slaves who fled to Canada would be protected
- d. Slavery was abolished in the Union

Q8. The purpose of the authors of "The Federalist" papers was to:

- a. Establish a strong, free press in the colonies
- b. Confirm George Washington's election as the first president
- c. Win foreign approval for the Revolutionary War
- d. Gain ratification of the U.S. Constitution

Q9. Sputnik was the name given to the first:

- a. Telecommunications system
- b. Animal to travel into space
- c. Hydrogen bomb
- d. Man-made satellite

Q10. The Missouri Compromise was the act that:

- a. Funded the Lewis and Clark expedition on the upper Missouri River
- b. Granted statehood to Missouri but denied the admission of any other states
- c. Settled the boundary dispute between Missouri and Kansas
- d. Admitted Maine into the Union as a free state and Missouri as a slave state

Q11. Which document established the division of powers between the states and the federal government?

- a. The Marshall Plan
- b. The Constitution
- c. The Declaration of Independence
- d. The Articles of Confederation

Q12. When was Thomas Jefferson president?

- a. 1780-1800
- b. 1800-1820
- c. 1820-1840
- d. 1840-1860
- e. 1860-1880

Q13. What was the lowest point in American fortunes in the Revolutionary War?

- a. Saratoga
- b. Bunker Hill
- c. Valley Forge
- d. Fort Ticonderoga

Q14. In his Farewell Address, President George Washington warned against the danger of:

- a. Expanding into territories beyond the Appalachian Mountains
- b. Having war with Spain over Mexico
- c. Entering into permanent alliances with foreign governments
- d. Building a standing army and strong navy

Q15. The Monroe Doctrine declared that:

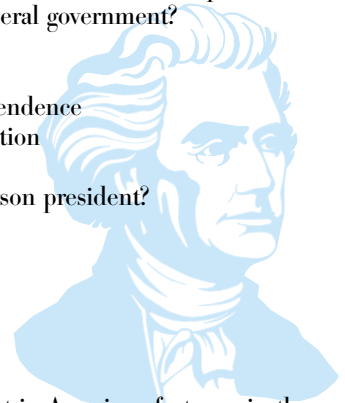
- a. The American blockade of Cuba was in accord with international law
- b. Europe should not acquire new territories in the Western Hemisphere
- c. Trade with China should be open to all Western nations
- d. The annexation of the Philippines was legitimate

Q16. Who was the European who traveled in the United States and wrote down perceptive comments about what he saw in *Democracy in America*?

- a. Lafayette
- b. Tocqueville (TOKE-ville)
- c. Crevecoeur (cre-VA-see-aire)
- d. Napoleon

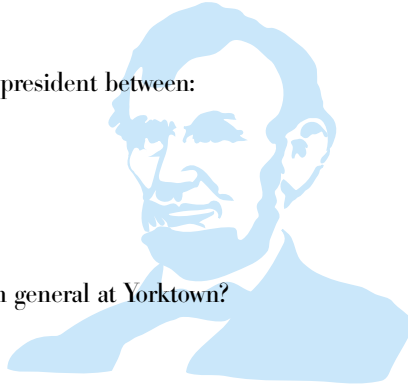
Q17. Identify Snoop Doggy Dog.

- a. A rap singer

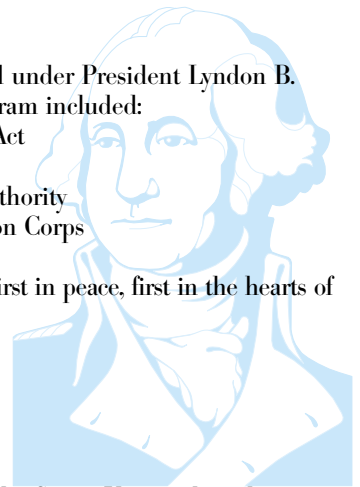


# Than America's College Seniors?

- b. Cartoon by Charles Schulz  
c. A mystery series  
d. A jazz pianist
- Q18. Abraham Lincoln was president between:  
a. 1780-1800  
b. 1800-1820  
c. 1820-1840  
d. 1840-1860  
e. 1860-1880
- Q19. Who was the American general at Yorktown?  
a. William T. Sherman  
b. Ulysses S. Grant  
c. Douglas MacArthur  
d. George Washington
- Q20. John Marshall was the author of:  
a. Roe vs. Wade  
b. Dred Scott vs. Kansas  
c. Marbury vs. Madison  
d. Brown vs. Board of Education
- Q21. Who was the "Father of the Constitution"?  
a. George Washington  
b. Thomas Jefferson  
c. Benjamin Franklin  
d. James Madison
- Q22. Who said, "I regret that I have only one life to give for my country"?  
a. John F. Kennedy  
b. Benedict Arnold  
c. John Brown  
d. Nathan Hale
- Q23. What was the source of the following phrase: "Government of the people, by the people, for the people"?  
a. The speech: "I have a Dream"  
b. Declaration of Independence  
c. U.S. Constitution  
d. Gettysburg Address
- Q24. Who was the second president of the U.S.?  
a. Thomas Jefferson  
b. James Madison  
c. John Adams  
d. Benjamin Franklin
- Q25. Who was president when the U.S. purchased the Panama Canal?  
a. Theodore Roosevelt  
b. Jimmy Carter  
c. Franklin D. Roosevelt  
d. Woodrow Wilson
- Q26. Who was the leading advocate for the U.S. entry into the League of Nations?  
a. George C. Marshall  
b. Woodrow Wilson



- c. Henry Cabot Lodge  
d. Eleanor Roosevelt
- Q27. Who said, "Speak softly but carry a big stick"?  
a. William T. Sherman  
b. Sitting Bull  
c. John D. Rockefeller  
d. Theodore Roosevelt
- Q28. The Battle of the Bulge occurred during:  
a. The Vietnam War  
b. World War II  
c. World War I  
d. The Civil War
- Q29. Which of the following was a prominent leader of the Abolitionist Movement?  
a. Malcolm X  
b. Martin Luther King Jr.  
c. W.E.B. Du Bois  
d. Frederick Douglass
- Q30. Who was the president of the United States at the beginning of the Korean War?  
a. John F. Kennedy  
b. Franklin D. Roosevelt  
c. Dwight Eisenhower  
d. Harry Truman
- Q31. When the United States entered World War II, which two major nations were allied with Germany?  
a. Italy and Japan  
b. Italy and Poland  
c. Italy and Russia  
d. Russia and Japan
- Q32. Social legislation passed under President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society Program included:  
a. The Sherman Antitrust Act  
b. The Voting Rights Act  
c. The Tennessee Valley Authority  
d. The Civilian Conservation Corps
- Q33. Who was "First in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen"?  
a. George Washington  
b. Woodrow Wilson  
c. Dwight Eisenhower  
d. Abraham Lincoln
- Q34. Who was the leader of the Soviet Union when the United States entered the Second World War?  
a. Peter Ustinov (YOU-stin-off)  
b. Nikita Khrushchev (CRUZ-chev)  
c. Marshal Tito  
d. Joseph Stalin



- Answers to the Questions:  
1.c; 2.c; 3.a; 4.c; 5.b; 6. b; 7.a; 8.d; 9.d; 10.d; 11.b; 12.b; 13.c; 14.c;  
15.b; 16.b; 17.a; 18.e; 19.d; 20.c; 21.d; 22.d; 23.d; 24.c; 25.a; 26.b;  
27.d; 28.b; 29.d; 30.d; 31.a; 32.b; 33.a; 34.d.

# History Results Shock the Nation

Since the press conference on ACTA's report, *Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century*, media attention and editorial comment have been extensive and virtually unanimous in support of revitalizing America's historical memory.

Here's just a sampling of the news and editorial coverage ACTA has received across the country:

*The Washington Post, syndicated*

*"Neglecting History" by David Broder, July 2, 2000*

"A question for you before you set off your fireworks: Who was the American general at Yorktown? You have four guesses: William Tecumseh Sherman, Ulysses S. Grant, Douglas MacArthur or George Washington. When that question was asked late last year of 556 randomly chosen seniors at 55 top-rated colleges and universities, one out of three got it right. ...

---

*"[T]he challenge to parents and educators is not to be ignored."*

*-- David Broder, The Washington Post*

---

The results of the survey, using 34 questions normally asked of high school students, not elite college and university seniors, justify the term 'historical illiteracy.' That is what four members of Congress called the situation in a joint resolution they introduced last week warning that 'the next generation of American leaders and citizens is in danger of losing America's civic memory.'

Congress can do nothing but decry the situation. As Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, one of the sponsors, said, 'We are not here to establish a national curriculum.' But the challenge to parents and educators is not to be ignored."

*ABC News*

*"This Week with Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts," July 2, 2000*

SAM DONALDSON: I want to now come to something that has nothing to do with politics. It has to do with education. Published in the New York Times is an interesting History 101 quiz. It was not given by the Times, but someone gave this to 55 universities. These are college seniors and Harvard and other prestigious schools were included. Here were some of the questions and some of the percentages of right answers.

Number one. Folks, play along. Who was the American general at Yorktown? William T. Sherman, Ulysses S. Grant, Douglas MacArthur, George Washington. Derek:

DEREK MCGINTY: George Washington.

SAM DONALDSON: Well, only 34 percent--34 percent--got that right.

Number two. John Marshall was the author of *Roe vs. Wade*, *Dred Scott vs. Kansas*, *Marbury vs. Madison*, *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. George:

GEORGE WILL: *Marbury vs. Madison*.

SAM DONALDSON: That's correct. I mean, the great chief justice. Twenty-one percent of college seniors got that right. ...

GEORGE WILL: Well, all of these seniors at some very prestigious schools, I don't know all of them, but they included Harvard, Princeton and Brown. All these schools had one thing in common: none of them have an American History requirement for graduation. ...

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: I'll--I'll--I'll confess. I took the test and I got--I got two wrong. But I think George is on to something. I actually taught at Columbia the last couple of years, and they have a core curriculum which helps. What I saw among the students now is they're in some ways very--so much smarter than students in the past. Their SAT scores are through the roof, but they don't necessarily know as much because they're not getting this concentrated teaching in history and other subjects.

*The New York Times, The Week In Review*

*"History 101: Snoop Doggy Roosevelt," July 2, 2000*

"Listen up, class. We hate to spoil your holiday weekend, but an alarming new survey of American history knowledge -- released just days before Independence Day, no less -- suggests that the nation is in desperate need of summer school. The report, sponsored by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, a Washington-based nonprofit group that promotes liberal-arts study, posed 34 high-school level questions randomly to 556 seniors at 55 leading colleges and universities, including Harvard, Princeton and Brown.

Only one student answered all the questions correctly, and the average score was a sobering 53 percent -- even with a couple of gimmes about cartoon characters and rap stars tossed in. But maybe it's not too surprising: according to the survey, none of the schools examined require American history courses for graduation."

*Chicago Tribune*

*"Jefferson, Not 'The Jeffersons,'" July 2, 2000*

"Another wave of college graduates is heading off into the real world, armed with degrees and eager to make their mark. Just don't ask them anything about history.

... But all is not lost. Ninety-nine percent of the students knew who the cartoon characters Beavis and Butthead are, and 98 percent could identify the rap singer Snoop Doggy Dogg.

On second thought, maybe all is lost."

able individuals, events, and values that have shaped this nation,” said Lieberman, “we are losing much of what it means to be an American. And we are losing sight of the fundamental responsibilities we share as citizens in a free democracy.”

---

*“When we lose the memory of our past... we are losing much of what it means to be an American.”*  
-- ACTA National Council member  
*Sen. Joe Lieberman*

---

“We are introducing this resolution to draw attention to the troubling historical illiteracy of our next generation of leaders,” Petri said. “Without knowledge of our history, we lack an understanding and appreciation of the democratic principles which define and sustain us as a free people, namely, liberty, justice, tolerance, govern-

ment by the consent of the governed, and equality under the law.”

“I hope that the measure we plan to introduce will bring more attention to this important issue and encourage students to learn more about our country,” Gorton stated at the press conference.

Within days, Gorton’s wish had come true with media outlets across the country providing voluminous coverage of the disturbing study with many reprinting the 34 questions used in the ACTA report.

#### **From Idea to Action**

Confronted with ACTA’s findings, some boards of trustees began to take action. At the press conference, ACTA president Jerry Martin was able to report that the State University of New York, George Mason University and James Madison University -- thanks to the

efforts of trustees working with ACTA -- have recently adopted American history requirements. The City University of New York has taken the first steps to do the same.

And ACTA is not letting up. In the next few weeks, ACTA will be sending a copy of the Resolution and report to over 2000 college and university trustees across the country. We have asked Senator Lieberman and his colleagues to hold Congressional hearings to focus public attention even more on this national disaster and what can be done about it.

Samples of the media commentary, the text of the full Resolution and the 34 questions asked can be found in a special section of *Inside Academe*. ■

#### **INSIDE ACADEME**

is published quarterly by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni  
Washington, DC

Publisher: Jerry L. Martin

Editor: Anne D. Neal

**AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES  
AND ALUMNI**

1726 M Street, N.W., Suite 800

Washington, D.C. 20036

Telephone: 202-467-6787; 1-888-ALUMNI-8

Fax: 202-467-6784

E-mail: [info@goacta.org](mailto:info@goacta.org)

Web: <http://www.goacta.org>

© 2000 American Council of Trustees and Alumni

Permission is granted to reprint materials that originate in *Inside Academe*.

Please credit *Inside Academe*, American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

## **What’s Happening?**

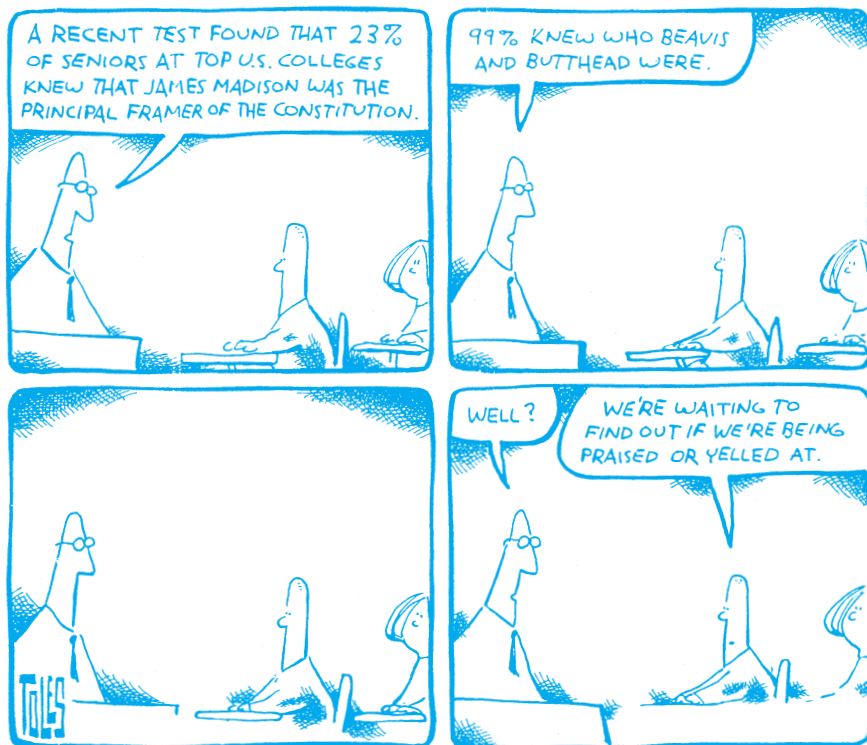
What’s happening in American education? Here’s what Peter Wood, associate provost of Boston University, had to say at a higher education conference sponsored by the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy:

Faced with a thirty-year decline in the quality of preparation our high schools provide students, we have responded how? By lowering admissions standards, admitting ever higher percentages of ever less-qualified students, by adding campuses and remedial programs and subtracting required courses, by piling on new financial incentives to attend college regardless of students’ real aspirations and abilities, and by tampering with the indices, such as SAT scores, to disguise the magnitude of the decline. ■

# ACTA Announces New Leadership Donor Society

To expand its activities and diversify its funding, ACTA is creating a Society of Fellows who contribute \$5000 or more. Fellows will receive special "insiders' advisories," invitations to special events, and free copies of all publications.

If you would like more information about joining the Society of Fellows, please call Jerry Martin at 1-888-ALUMNI-8. ■



TOLES © 2000 The Buffalo News. Reprinted with permission of UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE. All rights reserved.

## INSIDE ACADEME

Summer 2000, Vol. V, No. 4

A Quarterly Publication of the American  
Council of Trustees and Alumni  
1726 M Street, N.W., Suite 800  
Washington, D.C. 20036

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

BULK RATE  
NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
FOND DU LAC, WI  
PERMIT NO. 317