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TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

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December 22, 2014

The Honorable Nikki Haley
Office of the Governor
South Carolina State Capitol
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

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Dear Governor Haley:

American higher education, once called "the envy of the world," is in crisis. The people of your state look to you to ensure an affordable, high quality education for taxpayers. Through your leadership your state's public higher education system can be an engine of economic strength and continued prosperity, and an institution that encourages conscientious citizenship.

Across the nation, present day universities have been called to account for sharply increased costs, low academic standards, and often shockingly low graduation rates and value-added. Students hold loan debt of over \$1 trillion. Despite immense costs, over one quarter of employers in a survey by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills called the writing skills of recently-hired, *four-year college graduates* "deficient."

Public colleges and universities can reform—but that will not happen without strong leadership from governors. You play a unique role in improving student outcomes and reducing costs. Governors can appoint reform-minded trustees, set a policy agenda, and hold universities clearly and publicly accountable for results.

This is why I am sending you a copy of *Governance for a New Era*, the product of a collaboration of 22 prominent leaders from across the political spectrum including former Michigan Governor John Engler, former Florida Lieutenant Governor Frank Brogan, former U.S. Senator Hank Brown, and former U.S. Representative Tom McMillen. This bold statement includes broad support for the gubernatorial appointment process at a time when many organizations—and some legislatures—are calling for diminishing gubernatorial authority in the trustee selection process.

PROMOTING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EXCELLENCE

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The report also outlines the critical role that governors play in appointing engaged and informed trustees and then equipping them with the education they need to be responsible stewards of the public interest. Earlier this year, every trustee of your state's colleges and universities received a copy of this report, as well as the enclosed *Implementing Governance for a New Era* action plan and *Getting the Data: 10 Questions Trustees Should Ask*, two compact guides designed to help them obtain objective, quantifiable measures of academic success and cost-effectiveness.

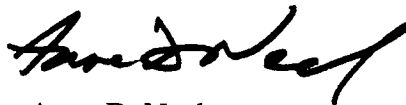
These resources are but a few examples of how the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) advises and supports governors and other policymakers regarding higher-education issues in everything from cost-reduction to curricular reform and accountability measures. We also provide seminars and consulting to policymakers, and we can offer our research expertise to you and your education advisors.

In recent years, ACTA has presented at statewide trustee conferences convened by governors and coordinating boards in states including Virginia, South Carolina, Indiana, and Ohio. These training and orientation sessions supply trustees with the information necessary to appreciate their responsibilities as public fiduciaries.

These are resources that governing boards urgently need in order to exercise independent oversight but rarely have. Often they are almost entirely dependent on the institutions they are entrusted to oversee for information and hence cannot be informed, effective fiduciaries. Governors can help by supporting initiatives that provide trustees with independent board staff and independent resources for oversight. The enclosed brochure, *Leading the Charge: Governors, Higher Education, and Accountability*, summarizes steps that a governor can take to improve the academic and financial health of the state's public universities and identifies ways in which ACTA can help. I hope that you will review the brochure and contact us to discuss how, together, we can meet the pressing challenges in public higher education.

I know you are committed to ensuring that South Carolina's students receive a rigorous, first-rate education that will prepare them for the challenges of career and community—and at a reasonable price. ACTA can help reach these worthy goals. Please feel free to call us at 202-467-6787. And thank you for your service!

Warm regards,



Anne D. Neal
President

Enclosures



Leading the Charge

Governors, Higher Education and Accountability



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A black and white photograph of classical architecture, featuring several large columns with fluted shafts and a stone wall. The image is used as a background for the report cover.

Governance for a **NEW ERA**

A Blueprint for Higher Education Trustees

Benno C. Schmidt, Chairman

PROJECT ON GOVERNANCE FOR A NEW ERA

August 2014