

College Donor

QUARTERLY

a publication of the **Fund for Academic Renewal**

How Alumni Donors Can Advocate for Free Speech

Alumni donors play an important role in promoting free expression at their alma maters. Unlike trustees and faculty, they can voice concerns to university leadership without jeopardizing their positions. Unlike current students, alumni have a greater depth of experience beyond the university campus and can offer real-world perspectives on issues related to free expression and viewpoint diversity. Though they have no formal governing authority, alumni hold significant influence at their alma maters through their giving and their loyalty. They hold the university's annual operating budget—and reputation—in their hands.

Recognizing the powerful potential of alumni to advance change at their alma maters, Princeton University alumni and co-founders of Princetonians for Free Speech—Edward Yingling and Stuart Taylor, Jr.—formed the Alumni Free Speech Alliance (AFSA) in October 2021. AFSA unites concerned alumni across the country who want to protect open inquiry at their universities, and it provides a forum for sharing best practices.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) partnered with AFSA soon after its formation to help advance our common cause of promoting academic freedom

in higher education. In a press release applauding AFSA's efforts, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff said, "Higher education is in crisis. The voices of alumni who remember better campus values and higher academic standards are urgently needed for a long-overdue course correction."

So far, 12 alumni groups have joined AFSA, hailing from Davidson College, Princeton University, Yale University, Cornell University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Virginia Military Institute, the University of North Carolina, Bucknell University, Wofford University, Lafayette College, the University of Virginia, and Washington & Lee.

Alumni donors who want to become involved in this movement and make a difference on their campus can explore if an alumni group dedicated to promoting free expression exists at their alma mater. If not, they can help create one. AFSA provides mentoring and resources to help alumni navigate the logistics of starting an organization, like gathering funds and raising awareness.

Working with AFSA is one of the many ways that FAR continues to support donors who are committed to reviving a culture of free expression on America's college campuses. 🌱

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INTELLIGENT COLLEGE GIVING. The Fund for Academic Renewal serves alumni and college donors who aim to support a renewal of the highest standards on college campuses through targeted philanthropy.

ACTA Hosts Summit and Webinar for Alumni



Participants of the Alumni Summit with John Tomasi (Heterodox Academy), Michael Poliakoff (ACTA), and Nadine Strossen. Photo by Hanna McCune

On February 24 and 25, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) and the Alumni Free Speech Alliance (AFSA) cohosted the inaugural Alumni Summit on Free Expression in Washington, DC. The summit brought together the organizers of alumni free-speech groups in the AFSA network. Guided by experts in free speech advocacy, attendees shared resources and strategies for promoting free expression, academic freedom, and viewpoint diversity at colleges and universities.

More than 80 individuals attended the summit, which was held at the Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington. We were honored to hear keynote speeches from Nadine Strossen,

past president of the American Civil Liberties Union; Samantha Harris, past director of policy research at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education; and Jonathan Rauch, journalist and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. During the summit, ACTA discussed several resources we will provide to alumni leaders as they continue to foster change at their institutions. On April 1, ACTA hosted a webinar to introduce alumni to our College Debates and Discourse Program. Established in 2018 as a partnership with the grassroots organization Braver Angels and the student group BridgeUSA, this program convenes parliamentary-style debates on college campuses across the country. Through the debates, students learn how to engage with perspectives across the ideological spectrum in a spirit of civility and respect. To date, we have conducted over 80 debates.

FAR Director Emily Koons Jae hosted the webinar. Doug Sprei, ACTA's director of the College Debates and Discourse Program, and Chandler Skinner of Braver Angels explained how the debates are transforming campus cultures by dismantling political polarization and renewing civil discourse. Alumni leaders learned how the process for holding one of these debates at their alma maters.

If you are interested in learning more about AFSA or our College Debates and Discourse Program, please email us at info@GoACTA.org. 🌱

FAR in the Field

Rebecca Richards, FAR's program manager, recently attended Democracy and Philanthropy in America, a conference in Winter Park, Florida, hosted by American Philanthropic's Center for Civil Society (C4CS). Donors, philanthropic advisors, and nonprofit leaders convened to discuss how charitable giving can build healthy social institutions and the potential ramifications of proposed legislative changes to charitable giving rules. Here are two big ideas from the day's events.

Creating cultural institutions that incorporate the best of what technology can offer while rebuilding

social bonds is a difficult task, but one which savvy philanthropists must face head on.

Since Robert Putnam published *Bowling Alone* in 2000, sociologists have noted the dramatic decline of involvement in traditional institutions such as religious groups, volunteer associations, and fraternal organizations. Historically, these institutions served as a way for people to build social bonds and practice civic skills, such as solving problems and working across ideological lines. Because technology advanced while venues for interpersonal connection diminished, the former is often held responsible for the latter.

In his opening remarks at the conference, U.S. Senator Ben Sasse argued that we cannot simply rebuild old institutions but must develop new ways to strengthen civic skills that incorporate the benefits of technology. During the pandemic, mutual aid and "buy nothing" groups used social media to connect the needs of friends or locals with others who could provide support. Philanthropists could fund experimental organizations that harness technology to build social connections, support local media reporting reliable news, and increase access to voting and civic information.

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Donor TIPS

Read “Elements of a Sound Agreement”

FAR helps higher education donors craft gifts with enduring impact. Along with offering personalized guidance to individual philanthropists, FAR publishes resources to walk donors through every step of the giving process. Our succinct, two-page guide, “Elements of a Sound Gift Agreement,” helps donors identify provisions they should include in a gift agreement to articulate and protect their intent. The guide covers important clauses like naming rights, donor standing, and changed circumstances.

Gift agreements are a critical part of the giving process, particularly for restricted gifts. These documents help ensure that the university recipient understands the vision of the donor and that donors understand the university’s policies and regulations.

Contact Emily Koons Jae at (202) 467-6787 or ejae@AcademicRenewal.org to request your free copy of “Elements of a Sound Gift Agreement.”



ELEMENTS OF A SOUND GIFT AGREEMENT



The gift agreement is a critical part of the giving process. You do not need immediately to sign the initial gift agreement given to you by the college. The document ought to be the result of a conversation between you and the college or university you wish to give to. By the end of the process, you should have a well-crafted gift agreement that is specific about your intent, the mechanics of the gift, and what you and the college should expect from each other. Be confident that the institution is aligned with the gift agreement before you sign. Enlist the help of legal counsel, and ask a qualified third-party organization to review the agreement. In order to set up your gift for success, the gift agreement should articulate your intent, set expectations, and anticipate changes.

ARTICULATE YOUR INTENT

A statement of purpose. Consider adding biographical details and the personal reasons why you are making the gift. The staff at the university will change, and over time, they may no longer be familiar with you as a donor. Including biographical information communicates your vision and values to whomever reads the gift agreement. It also helps guide the university in implementing the gift appropriately for many years in the future.

Use of the gift. You should be as clear as possible when expressing donor intent. Restrictions should be specific enough to do the job, making it explicit to the grant recipient what would and what would not fulfill your intent. Focus carefully on the issues that matter to you, but do not include aspects that are not really essential.

Naming rights. Communicate your expectations for naming rights and recognition in the gift agreement. Whether on a plaque, at events, in publications, and/or through online and digital media, the university should not have to guess how you would like to be recognized for your contribution. Retain the right to revoke the use of your name, as you may not wish to be associated with a particular institution or project in the future. Naming rights are particularly complicated for buildings, which may eventually need to be renovated substantially or taken down. Be clear about what you would like to happen in this circumstance.

SET EXPECTATIONS

Payment schedule. While some donors give the full amount at once, others may pledge a certain amount but pay in installments. Whichever choice you make should be obvious in the gift agreement. You may make payment contingent on receiving progress reports with detailed information about the management of the gift.

Reporting obligations. When you make the gift, establish when you would like to receive progress reports and what those reports should include. State the goal of the gift in such a way that it is possible to devise clear criteria for evaluating results. Requesting financial details, if appropriate, is one effective method for monitoring the use of your gift. At the very least, require an annual report, stipulate the contents of that report, set a deadline for its submission, and clarify to whom it should be sent. The more precise you are, the better.



ACTA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to academic excellence, academic freedom, and accountability in higher education. We receive no government funding and are supported through the generosity of individuals and foundations.

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Proposed charitable reforms in Congress are unlikely to pass this session. However, potential legislation highlights cultural criticisms and concerns with philanthropy.

Throughout the day, the Accelerating Charitable Efforts (ACE) Act was a common topic of discussion. Among other changes, the ACE Act would institute a 15-year payout requirement on donor-advised funds (DAFs) or delay the income-tax deduction. The ACE Act would also preclude family foundations from counting family members’ travel and salary toward the 5% payout requirement.

Leslie Lenkowsky, professor emeritus in public affairs and philanthropic studies at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, noted that the ACE Act lacks significant support in Congress. He acknowledged, however, that the legislation is worth discussing as its contents reflect common concerns about a lack of transparency in the charitable sector, including the “warehousing” of philanthropic funds in DAFs and growing distrust of philanthropists’ true motivations. While this specific legislation may not pass, similar proposals very well might in the future.



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In just one day, the Democracy and Philanthropy in America conference managed to address many of the most urgent challenges facing the charitable sector in 2022. The hybridization of society and technology is seemingly here to stay, as is public skepticism about the charitable sector. The willingness to wrestle with these issues is promising for the future, not only for philanthropy, but also for a country that desperately needs to rebuild strong civic institutions and social cohesion.



COLLEGE DONOR *QUARTERLY*

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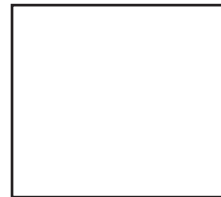
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 Fund for Academic Renewal

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About FAR

A program of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, the **Fund for Academic Renewal** (FAR) serves alumni and college donors who aim to support a renewal of the highest standards on college campuses through targeted philanthropy.

With access to a network of on-campus contacts, FAR assists donors in maximizing the impact of their investment by helping them craft gift agreements that are carefully tailored to achieve their goals. FAR has guided over \$175 million in gifts since 2016. Because every gift is different, FAR offers personalized guidance for individuals at every giving level.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, FAR provides these services, including legal consultation from Arnold & Porter LLP, at no cost to donors.



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