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COLLEGE EDUCATION PRODUCES “PASSIVE” CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Wilmington, DE – The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), the leading non-profit educational organization based in Wilmington, Delaware, releases its fifth annual **National Civic Literacy Report** “*Enlightened Citizenship: How Civic Knowledge Trumps a College Degree in Promoting Active Civic Engagement.*”

Since 2006, ISI has been engaged in a multi-year project designed to assess how well America’s colleges and universities are doing in preparing their graduates for the kind of informed and responsible citizenship Benjamin Franklin had in mind. **This year’s installment seeks to measure for the first time the impact that earning a bachelor’s degree and acquiring additional knowledge of America’s history and institution exerts on civic engagement.** ISI commissioned a 33–question civic literacy test to a random sample of 2,508 American adults, ranging from those without high school diplomas to those with advanced degrees.

2011 Report – *Enlightened Citizenship*: So, if a college education has only a negligible impact on a student’s civic literacy, what kind of influences does it have on the civic life of its graduates? To provide an answer, ISI also asked its respondents 13 civic engagement questions, within the original 33-question test, regarding their involvement to these civic engagement items in the last year. ISI then compared the impact of a college degree on how a person answered those questions with that of gaining civic literacy, as defined by their score on the ISI exam (regardless of education). ISI found:

- College fails to promote high levels of civic knowledge, with a bachelor’s degree **exerting zero influence on a graduates’ “active” civic engagement**
- Gaining greater civic knowledge trumps college as *the leading factor* in encouraging active civic engagement
- Civic self-education and frequent religious attendance increase active citizenship while video games detract.

The findings in the 2011 Report, available at www.AmericanCivicLiteracy.org, sharply illustrate the real-world impact of a college degree and the failure of higher education to create informed and engaged citizens.

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) is a non-profit, non-partisan, tax-exempt educational organization whose purpose is to convey to successive generations of college youth a better understanding of the values and institutions that sustain a free and virtuous society. Founded in 1953, ISI works “to educate for liberty” — to identify the best and the brightest college students and to nurture in these future leaders the American ideal of ordered liberty. Visit ISI online at www.isi.org

To receive a copy of the report or to schedule an interview with Dr. Richard Brake, Director of University Stewardship, please contact Carol Houseal at media@isi.org or (302) 524-6167.