

Independent Educational Consultants and Their Impact on Independent School Applications

A white paper based on original research



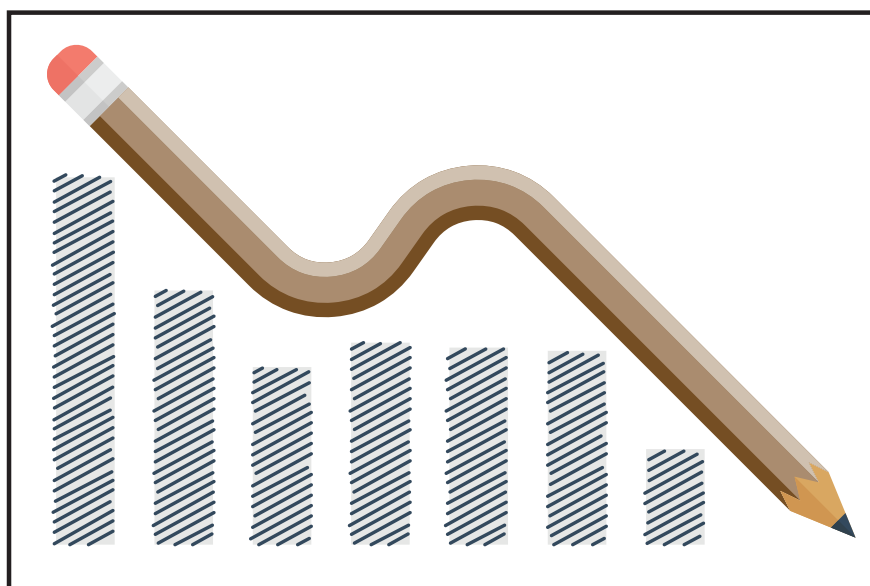
The Crisis

Many boarding schools in the United States are facing an immediate crisis. Declining domestic enrollments over the last decade have been offset, in part, by increased international applications. Most schools have seen this as a temporary fix, only delaying the effect of the inevitable domestic losses. It is this threat to the existence of boarding schools that led The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) to create the North American Boarding Initiative (NABI).

The Independent Educational Consultants Association (IECA) has long been an important resource for boarding schools, believing that there was a role for the Association and our members to play in preserving boarding education and promoting those unique experiences that benefit young men and women. Knowing that hard data was needed to support that intuition, IECA conducted an extensive survey of its

membership that explored family decision-making patterns, the scale and scope of member consultants' practices, the association's international and domestic reach, and much more.

In the end, the data confirm the crucial role that independent educational consultants play in boarding school enrollment and, more importantly, demonstrate the number and range of families that IECs encourage to explore boarding school opportunities.



“Having the opportunity to work with an independent educational consultant—priceless. Over 50% of our boarding students come from IECs. Independent educational consultants are invaluable resources to both schools and families, as they are the key to finding the appropriate fit for individual students.”

— **Matthew S. Hoeniger**,
Assistant Headmaster/
Director of Admission,
Rumsey Hall School, CT

Growing Presence in School Placements

42% of IECA members advise on school placements.

When IECA began, the organization was wholly within the boarding school world. Through the first 10 years of the Association's existence, nearly all members advised on secondary school placements and early conferences were held under the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) umbrella.

As IECA membership has grown over the past 40 years, the percentage of members who advise on secondary placements has steadily but modestly declined at a rate of about 2% annually, reaching just 40% in 2012, although there has been a slow but steady increase over the last four years. We have also seen a corresponding increase in college advising.

Yet today there are more IECA member consultants who specialize in school placement than ever before. Twenty years ago, 70% of our total membership of 250 independent educational consultants (IECs) advised on school placements. That represented 175 school consultants working with families.

Today, with 1,513 members and 42% engaged in school consulting, IECA has more than 630 members advising on secondary placements. The percentage may be down, but in real numbers there has been a *250% increase* in the number of members specializing in school advising.

What Makes an IECA Member Consultant Different?

To find the right fit, IECA members take the time to learn as much as possible about students and their families. They help clarify educational needs, identify strengths and weaknesses, and consider interests and learning styles. By thoroughly researching and visiting scores of campuses, an IEC is able to develop a customized list of appropriate options. IECA members engage in ongoing professional development in psychoeducational testing, new learning environments, and more.

In short, IECA members seek to refer students that are the best match—aiming for the 'small end' of the admission funnel.

1996: 250 school placement IECs
2016: 630 school placement IECs

The trend lines are clear: over the next decade the number of school advisors within IECA membership will increase to nearly 1,000.

The families that work with IECA consultants

are largely the “tuition capable” families that NABI identifies as able to pay at least 80% of annual tuition. On the other end of the spectrum, the students for whom IECA members provide pro bono services—98% of members provide pro bono services—are often the same under-represented domestic students that schools clamor for to diversify their campuses.

Many schools have discovered that families who work with IECA members are not only typically financially viable, understand the importance of *fit* and *match* between the student and the school, and have a much better understanding of boarding school life, but the students are also appropriate candidates for admission and are more likely to have a successful boarding school experience.

Each year, our more than 630 school consultants work with over 15,000 students who are bound for secondary school. Of those students:

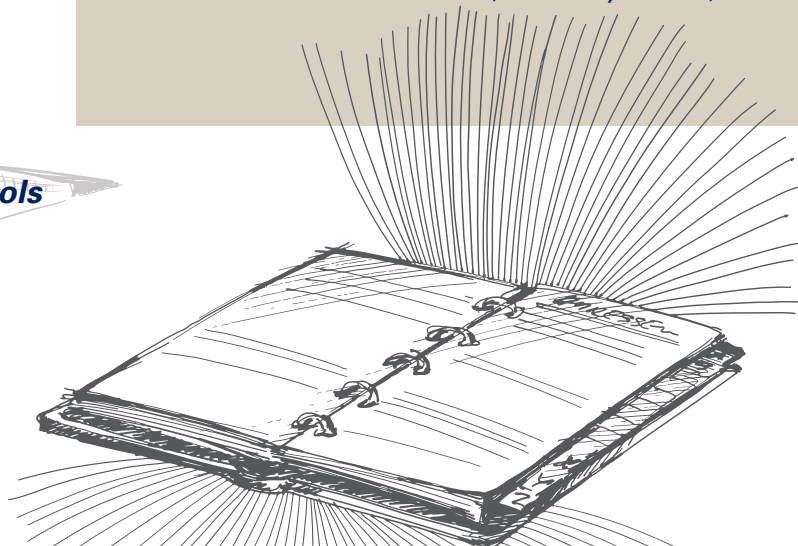
- **7,550** go on to traditional boarding schools
- **6,300** go on to day schools
- **1,260** go on to parochial schools

“With data driven research, the Salisbury School admissions office has significant evidence that a candidate working with an IECA educational consultant is strongly correlated with a student’s success in the admissions process and as a student at our school.

Salisbury has developed a statistical analysis of candidates with certain predictors for success. The profile includes traditional metrics: GPA, test scores, classes, recommendations, etc. It also includes points for noncognitive skills and, most notably, a weighting factor for working with an IEC, feeder school, or feeder program. We found a strong correlation between the origin of one’s first contact with our office and ultimate success on campus.

Bottom line? Our data driven admissions research provides evidence that boys recommended by IECA consultants are more likely to be appropriate candidates for us and are more likely to enroll and, in the end, be successful at our school.”

— Peter Gilbert,
Director of Admission, Salisbury School, CT



Uncovering New Domestic Boarding Families

One of the most important contributions IECA members make to boarding schools is introducing thousands of families each year to the remarkable difference a boarding education can make. It's important to note that many of those client families originally sought help for day school placements, with no previous experience or thoughts of boarding.

IECA members indicate that 17.6% of all clients and 22.8% of domestic clients are advisees who were not planning on a boarding education but were sold on the experience by the IEC. That equals over 1,500 new boarding families annually.

In 2016, IECA will examine the various advising techniques that result in some IECs bringing nearly 75% of their families to boarding and others many fewer. With more training for IECs, applications for those students who would be best served in a residential environment could significantly increase. IECA will further encourage its members to conduct more boarding school visits, host more admission representatives, and attend conference events zeroing in on boarding school opportunities.

"Engaging with IECs to help match mission appropriate students to our school has been critical to our success in building an intellectually, geographically, and socially diverse student body. IECA consultants have sent us some of our most successful students; young people who might never have found their way to our intentionally small boarding school. As school leaders, we save time and resources by working with IECs who understand the unique benefits of our individual schools. IECA consultants know our schools and send us students who will thrive in our communities."

— **Bradford Bates,**
Head of School, Dublin School, NH

Percent of IECA members who agree with the following statements:

- **17%** A majority of my clients have a family history of boarding school education.
- **98%** An important part of my work is helping families understand "great fit" over prestige.
- **72%** I encourage clients to consider day and boarding options, where appropriate.
- **96%** I encourage clients to look at single gender as well as coed schools.
- **68%** I help families understand school financial aid and expected tuition and fees.
- **91%** I encourage clients to pursue true passions and participate in new extra-curricular activities.
- **96%** I do pro bono and/or community service work.

Global Expansion

IECA's global presence has dramatically expanded. Just a few years ago, the Association had fewer than a dozen members located outside of the United States and they served students primarily in a couple of European nations plus Japan and Korea. Now, IECA has more than 50 IECs in China alone—and we do not accept commissioned agents as members. Our international members are bound by our ethical prohibitions against accepting any direct fees from schools.

Today, scores of IECA members work with thousands of international students. Nearly 23% of school placements involve students with international passports.

More importantly, over the past three years, members have advised more than 5,000 boarding students representing **76 nations**.

IECA regional groups, which have proliferated across the United States, have now begun to emerge in Asia, including Bangkok, Singapore, Shenzhen, Beijing, Shanghai, India, and Hong Kong. Each group should be included by admission representatives during their international visits.

One of IECA's fastest growing trends is the addition of international clients by members who have worked primarily as domestic IECs.

53% of IECA members work internationally, the highest number ever.



Austria
Australia
Angola
Argentina
Brazil
Belgium
Bahamas
Bermuda
Bulgaria
Bangladesh
Bali
Costa Rica
Canada
Colombia
China
Chile
Czech Republic
England
Ethiopia
Egypt
El Salvador
Ecuador
France
Guam
Guatemala
Germany
Hong Kong
Honduras
Italy
India
Ireland

Israel
Indonesia
Japan
Jamaica
Kazakhstan
Korea
Kuwait
Lithuania
Lebanon
Mexico
Malaysia
Monaco
Nepal
Nigeria
Norway
Netherlands
Philippines
Panama
Poland
Peru
Portugal
Russia
Rwanda
Romania
Serbia
Scotland
Spain
Sweden
Slavina
South Africa
Switzerland
Saudi Arabia

Singapore
Turkey
Thailand
Taiwan
Trinidad
Turks & Caicos
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
Uruguay
Vietnam
Venezuela
Zimbabwe

*and of course,
the United States*

IECA members are experts on schools.

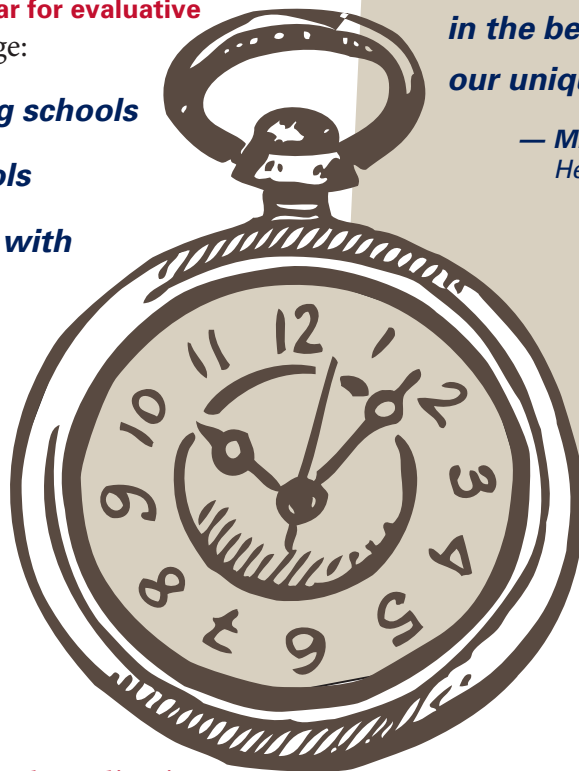
They work to understand a school's mission as well as its academic and co-curricular offerings, and seek to develop a full and complete understanding of which students thrive at a particular school. They know which schools can support students with specific learning profiles.

79% of school-advising IECs say they would attend a regional school- or IECA-sponsored multi-campus group tour. Only 6% say they definitely would not.

To keep abreast with what is happening on individual school campuses as well as with broader educational trends, IECA members host an average of 19 school representatives in their offices each year, and hundreds of members meet and reconnect with school reps at the biannual IECA conferences.

More importantly, many consultants indicate that they could not recommend a school they have not seen. **The average IECA member visits some 25 campuses a year for evaluative visits.** This includes, on average:

- **13** traditional boarding schools
- **7** traditional day schools
- **6** schools for students with learning disabilities
- **5** parochial and public charter schools.



IECA members spend an average of 27 hours on each school client! All to ensure the best possible placement for a student and the family.

"We have found over many years and in the most recent times that independent educational consultants have been fundamental and essential in our ability to determine the composition of our student body, bringing forward students from all across the country who bring a diversity of interests, skills, and talents to our school community. We would not be the school we are today without constructive partnerships with IECs who knowingly and confidently can recommend Kimball Union to their client families. We value these relationships formed over many years of collaboration in the best interest of our schools and our unique educational mission."

— Michael J. Shafer,
Head of School, Kimball Union Academy, NH

IECA is a nonprofit, professional association founded in 1976. As the nation's most respected voice of the profession, IECA sets the standards, leads the discussion, and serves as the public face of independent educational consulting to the media, schools and other professionals. When a family chooses an IECA member consultant, they are assured that IEC is experienced, thoroughly trained, vetted, and committed to the highest standards for ethical practices.

Membership

Those who achieve professional membership status in IECA:

- **Hold a master's degree or higher or have comparable experience and training**
- **Have three years of experience in admissions or counseling**
- **Have visited dozens of campuses for evaluative visits**
- **Provide three references, including from school admissions representatives**
- **Have helped place scores of students successfully**
- **Annually agree to the most rigorous ethical standards that govern school communications, including a prohibition against accepting any commission or other compensation from schools, and severely limit any gifts**
- **Complete an online ethics course.**

Nine Key Ways to Connect with IECA Members

- 1. Invite IECA members to participate in campus tours.**
- 2. Include a visit with local IECs when admission staff are traveling.**
- 3. Attend the IECA conference and participate in the School Fair.**
- 4. Submit a proposal to present at an IECA conference or a webinar.**
- 5. Engage with IECA members on Facebook and Twitter [@IECA].**
- 6. Provide IECA with a primary consultant contact at your school.**
- 7. Contribute an article for our Insights newsletter or blog.**
- 8. Order sets of IECA member labels to send out your information.**
- 9. Advertise in our newsletter or conference guides, or sponsor events.**

Visit www.IECAonline.com



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