



IECA⁺ INSIGHTS

THE JOURNAL OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

Winter 2021



IECA Government Relations Committee

WORKING FOR MEMBERS IN DC
AND IN STATE HOUSES

Calendar

For the most up-to-date calendar of events and more details, visit the home page of the IECA Member Network: network.iecaonline.com

FEBRUARY

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 04 Global College Conversations: University Consortium in Prague | 08 College Conversations: Penn State | 09 Gap Year Roundtable
Public Universities in OH: So Much to Discover | 10 Global Committee Meeting |
| 11 Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting
Global College Conversations: ESCP Business School | 12 IECA Business Roundtable | 17 IECA Board Meeting
IECA European Group Meeting
School Consultant "Drop-In" | 24 Global Gathering Open Forum by Global Committee |
| 25 What IECs Can Do to Help Prepare LD/ND Students for the Transition from High School to College | 26 Virtual Roundtable for Associate and Student Members | | |

MARCH

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| 03 IECA Executive Committee Meeting | 09 European College Admissions Tools—Part One | 10 Global Committee Meeting
LD/ND Virtual Roundtables | 11 Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting |
| 12 IECA Business Roundtable | 17 IECA Board Meeting
IECA European Group Meeting | 19 Homeschooling Panel Discussion with Stetson, University of CA, Vanderbilt, and Whittier | 26 Virtual Roundtable for Associate and Student Members |
| 30 European College Admissions Tools—Part Two | 31 Global Gathering Open Forum | | |

APRIL

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| 07 IECA Executive Committee Meeting | 08 Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting | 09 IECA Business Roundtable | 14 Global Committee Meeting |
| 21 IECA Board Meeting
IECA European Group Meeting | 23 Virtual Roundtable for Associate and Student Members | 28 Global Gathering Open Forum by Global Committee | |

Save the Date: IECA Spring Conference June 7-11, 2021

Note the new dates! Our Spring Conference will be held virtually, June 7-11, 2021.

Registration will open in mid-March. The conference model will shift slightly: the primary conference days will be Monday through Wednesday, June 7-9, and tours and workshops will be held on Thursday and Friday, June 10-11. Registered participants will have access to virtual exhibit booths through July 6 and all conference sessions and materials through July 18. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with members of the independent educational consultant community from across the country and around the world! Check our website for the most current information: link.iecaonline.com/Conference-IECs



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President's Letter

Ordinary Magic and Resilience

One year ago our school district informed parents that all students would begin two weeks of remote learning due to our county's first recorded cases of the Coronavirus. Two weeks came and went. Then two months. A "few" cases turned into hundreds. Then thousands.

A month into our stay-at-home orders, I reached out to my kid's school counselor with the hope that she would alleviate concerns I had about how this break from the normal routine would impact them.

"Kids are **resilient**."

That was it. Those three words were the reassurance I needed that they'd be just fine.

Now we're almost six months into a new school year and my kids are still at home. With me. Every. Day.

"Kids are **resilient**."

But...what about the adults? Do WE have that same **resiliency**?

If you've taken a psychology course, you may have studied **Resilience** Theory and explored research showing that **resilience** isn't static, happening in just one moment. A leading expert on **resilience**, Dr. Ann Masten, has studied how outside influences can impact whether or not a child will become **resilient**. She posits that factors such as family, friends, and community can greatly impact this dynamic process. But, again, what about us adults?

There's no question that all of us in our profession have experienced some form of adversity over the course of the past year. In fact, some would say it's been the most adversity-filled year of our lives. With so many of us working from home and unable to gather in person with our IECA colleagues at conferences and on tours, our lives may feel significantly more isolated than normal. The uncertainty of not knowing what the next few weeks, months, or even year holds can make it challenging to overcome the adversity surrounding us, both professionally and personally.



Kristina Dooley

But, here's the good news...and where our IECA community comes into play.

Remember that part above about the many factors impacting how well we overcome adversity? Family, friends, community? These are the things that Dr. Masten refers to as "Ordinary Magic." These are ordinary resources that play a role in our ability to be **resilient** in the face of adversity.

You, my IECA friends, are that "Ordinary Magic" for me, and for each other. Our community has come together in incredible ways over the past year. You have helped one another in big and small ways, helping our colleagues grow more **resilient** by the day. Here are just a few examples of this ordinary magic at play:

- Lisa Vella, chair of the Therapeutic Committee, has continued to lead weekly "Connecting During Stressful Times" meet-ups. Members participating in these

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In Focus

The Making a Difference Award recognizes these individuals' unprompted and cooperative efforts that have impacted the work of IECA's members.



Katherine Andersen



Stacey Cunitz



Eric Endlich



Heidi Molbak



Sydney Montgomery



Holly Ramsey



David Stoeckel

IECA sadly acknowledges the recent passing of Dave Stoeckel.



IECA Government Relations Committee:

Working for Members in DC and in State Houses

By Steven Mercer, EdD, IECA (CA), Chair of the IECA Government Relations Committee

In 2019, IECA created its first Government Relations Committee. In a short time, the committee has begun working on legislative priorities and future plans to serve the association and its members in federal and state legislative activity.

The origins of the Government Relations Committee are grounded in the Varsity Blues scandal, which grabbed headlines across the world and drew attention to the world of independent educational consulting. While some of the scrutiny was critical of independent educational consultants (IECs), it also provided an opportunity for organizations like IECA to highlight the positive work that we do as professionals.

One of the responses to the Varsity Blues scandal was legislation introduced in California that would create a mandatory registry for any IEC working with a client

based in that state. Assembly Bill 1312 immediately drew the attention of IECA leaders and staff who rallied to reach out to legislators and partners in other professional associations to understand the potential consequences should the bill be passed into law. Quickly, IECA became enmeshed in legislative affairs and learned a great deal about the challenges (and opportunities) of having a voice in legislative affairs impacting our members.

Although AB 1312 was not passed into law, it did result in two significant developments for IECA. First, the board established the Government Relations Committee to monitor potential future legislation that could impact members across the spectrum of IECA. Second, IECA engaged Pillsbury Law, a well-respected lobbying firm located within the network of legislative advocates across the United States. IECA's partnership

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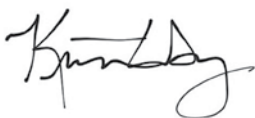


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conversations have looked to them as just the **resilience** recharge they need to begin their week during these difficult times.

- Bob Carlton and members of the Business Practices Committee recognized a need to help members become more **resilient** as business owners. Their newly created Business Practices Roundtable began meeting in the new year and has been an incredibly well-received opportunity for all IECA members.
- Many of our Regional Group leaders have continued to support their colleagues through robust programming already planned for 2021. The opportunity for our members to have meaningful regional connections has undoubtedly allowed them to exhibit **resilience** in the face of uncertain times.

So, to answer my original question: YES. I truly believe that adults can be just as **resilient** as children. The key, however, is discovering where you can find that ordinary magic. I hope you'll agree with me that our association is just that place.



Kristina Dooley, MA, CEP,
IECA President



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with Pillsbury Law has already proved to be a remarkable benefit to our association. The expertise provided by Pillsbury's lobbyists has accelerated the sophistication of our legislative knowledge and should prove to be a powerful tool for IECA in the future.

The Government Relations Committee is now creating the building blocks for an effective long-term legislative affairs program for the association, beginning with identifying our legislative priorities.


The Government Relations Committee's first priority is legislation that seeks to regulate the work of IECs. The second priority is legislation that impacts IECA members' ability to run our businesses. These are the issues that we will look out for most carefully and will potentially warrant the most significant action.

The Government Relations Committee is now creating the building blocks for an effective long-term legislative affairs program.

In addition to our two primary legislative priorities, the Government Relations Committee is monitoring potential legislative topics that may impact members across the spectrum of IECA specialties, including the college, learning differences, schools, and therapeutic consulting categories. We are watching for activity related to financial aid policies, college access, mental health issues for college students, privacy issues, DACA, international students, and any other potential legislation that will impact college enrollment. We also track potential legislation concerning learning differences, neurodiversity, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), F-1 Visa requirements, and accommodation issues. Additionally,

we monitor potential legislation impacting therapeutic consultants, such as licensure of therapeutic programs, insurance advocates and insurance parity, and youth transport.

Beyond following potential legislative topics of interest, the Government Relations Committee has begun advocacy work. The committee has started sending out regular updates to the IECA Member Network and the IECA blog, and we are committed to continuing to do so. We have also begun developing a mechanism for a grassroots call to action for IECA members. Should potential legislation arise that would benefit from a grassroots response from the IECA membership, such as a letter-writing campaign or calls to elected officials to advocate for a position on a particular piece of legislation, the Government Relations Committee would alert members and provide a user-friendly way to identify members' local elected officials as well as a sample letter or phone script.


Finally, the IECA Government Relations Committee is working to build long-term relationships with elected officials in Washington, DC and the states. To this end, working with our lobbyists at Pillsbury, the committee has begun to articulate talking points to introduce IECA to elected officials. In the next 12 months, we hope to conduct targeted meetings with key elected officials and staff. Our long-term goal is to leverage these relationships into an annual Lobby Day in Washington, DC for all members to participate in on behalf of the association. We believe these relationships will serve us well in the future when and if future legislation arises that impacts our association and our members. 

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Benefits of Internships: Paid and Unpaid

By Bibi Malek, EdM, IECA (Canada)

For high school students, an internship can be a transformative experience. This is likely their first foray into a professional environment and a real-life scenario. There are diverse opportunities in a variety of industries which students can pursue. In addition to providing experience in a work environment, internships look good on a résumé. For students with multiple internship experiences, these provide valuable insights, including a peek at a possible future career and help narrowing down both their major at university and what type of work environment suits them best. This is certainly also true for co-op programs offered at some US universities and most Canadian universities in almost every field imaginable.

Internships come in all shapes and sizes, some with more responsibilities and some with less. They range from two weeks to several months; keep in mind that the learning opportunities will be more limited with internships that are less than two weeks in length. One internship might be heavily supervised while another might have a student

working independently on a project. Entry-level internships might entail repetitive tasks. Some internships offer pay while others are unpaid. Given a choice, students are well-advised to choose an internship in a field that genuinely interests them rather than making the decision solely based on pay. Sometimes, that unpaid internship can turn out to be a much more valuable experience than the paid one. In either case, internships are of value in that they provide practical and transferable skills and can sometimes be a foot in the door in an organization—potentially leading to a full-time job upon graduation from university.

At the high school level, internships are not easy to come by. Students who manage to obtain internship positions usually do so through parental or family contacts and sometimes even work in the company where their mom, dad, or a close family member is employed. Whether the student is programming all day, designing an app for a start-up company, creating short animated videos for a

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non-profit, or building architectural models, the responsibilities can vary a great deal. However, that first internship, showcasing the fact that they held a 9-5 job for several weeks of the summer, could lead to bigger and better opportunities in future summers. For students applying to direct-entry programs such as medicine in the UK or engineering programs, having **relevant** work experience can give them an advantage as well as some substance to draw upon for the personal statement and essays they will have to write, increasing their chances of admission to their target program. High school seniors graduating early next May can try to procure a local summer internship to build up a strong résumé, laying the foundations for the following summer when they will be looking for something more serious or a job offering financial compensation.

High school seniors graduating early next May can try to procure a local summer internship to build up a strong résumé, laying the foundations for the following summer when they will be looking for something more serious or a job offering financial compensation.

Sometimes students who are creative and entrepreneurial come up with an idea and approach a company, offering their services either for no pay or at a reduced fee. For example, one of our students reached out to a small start-up business and offered to design their first website for them. Often, young people,

having grown up with social media, can use this tool to set up a marketing strategy for a new company with a small operating budget, helping them connect with more customers through Facebook and Instagram. Students must not underestimate their skills and talents and should see what opportunities they can create for themselves. The first step to doing this is to put together a presentable résumé. To make things easier, students can pick a free ready-made résumé template, easily accessible through Microsoft Word or Apple Pages. A simple one-page résumé is ideal for a high school student. Over time, as they add their postsecondary education as well as more activities and skills, including work experiences, the résumé will expand.

Over the years, we have had students engage in a variety of internships, including working at a science museum or aquarium. One student, interested in studying medicine, worked three summers (during high school and university summers) at a laboratory, testing the urine of racehorses for performance-enhancing drugs. Another student interned at an engineering consulting company and was told to come back and look them up after graduation. He did exactly that and has been employed there since. One student who was interested in business took on an internship at a financial firm, entering data in an Excel sheet all day while his close friend worked in a commercial real estate firm doing some marketing for them. We have had students who have been able to job shadow in doctor's offices, dental clinics, and architectural firms. For one, her internship in an architectural firm confirmed the fact that she wanted to go into architecture and for another, it did exactly the opposite; he realized this was not his true calling and he would not enjoy sitting at a desk drafting all day. He was happy that he came to this conclusion **before** applying to university. One student saw an Instagram ad for an internship at Lululemon's parent company, applied, and got the position. The next year, another one of our students applied for the same intern position even before it was advertised and had success. For some students, an unpaid internship one summer may lead to a paid internship the following summer at the same firm, given that the employer sees the student has potential and is adding value to their organization. For others, the fact that they have a strong reference letter from a paid or unpaid internship can impress the next employer evaluating their résumé.

Without a doubt, internships have many benefits for students, allowing them to interact with adults (sometimes even gaining a mentor), learn on the job, refine their skills, establish trust, gain leadership, grow in confidence, and network. These are only a few key points about how youth can benefit from paid and unpaid internships in both the short term and the long term. Clearly, the pros outweigh the cons here and putting in the effort to find an internship by tapping into all their contacts will be a worthwhile endeavor for both high school and university students. In the end, internships might make more sense to young people if we remind them that everyone started somewhere! 🙌

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Three Tips for Navigating the Admissions Process during COVID-19

By Rona Frederick, PhD, IECA Associate (Washington, DC) and Theodra Washington, CEP, IECA (MD)

Navigating the application process for independent schools can be arduous and sometimes intimidating in the best of times. During this pandemic, when everything is virtual, the process can be downright overwhelming. Here are a few general tips to help you as you work through the independent school admissions application journey.

Do your homework and take advantage of information found on the school's website as well as virtual activities. Since the majority of the admissions process is now virtual, it is extremely important for parents to find ways to deeply familiarize themselves with the school, including its curriculum, programming, and extracurricular activities. This can be accomplished by exploring its website, attending virtual tours, and attending school-sponsored virtual information sessions.

This year, it is more important than ever to seek clarity around the admissions process. Remember this is a new journey for everyone, including the admission teams.

Admission teams are more than happy to support you in your admission process. Take advantage

of their willingness to help. Inquire about virtual appointments. These appointments provide you with another opportunity to build relationships with admission team members. Seek clarity if you are unsure about anything you read, or may have heard, by placing a quick call to a school or sending an email; most answers are readily available. Many schools are also now posting videos on their websites to share information.

It is also important to be open to other sources of information! Speak with current families and join Listservs and other online parenting groups. Make sure you get an understanding of current parents' perspectives, opinions, and experiences with the school. This information will help you to make a decision about whether this school is a great fit for your family and child.

Find ways to build relationships with the schools. With everything virtual this year, building new relationships is even more challenging, yet it can be critical in helping you to gain a good understanding of any school. Most schools are relying on interviews, additional recommendations,

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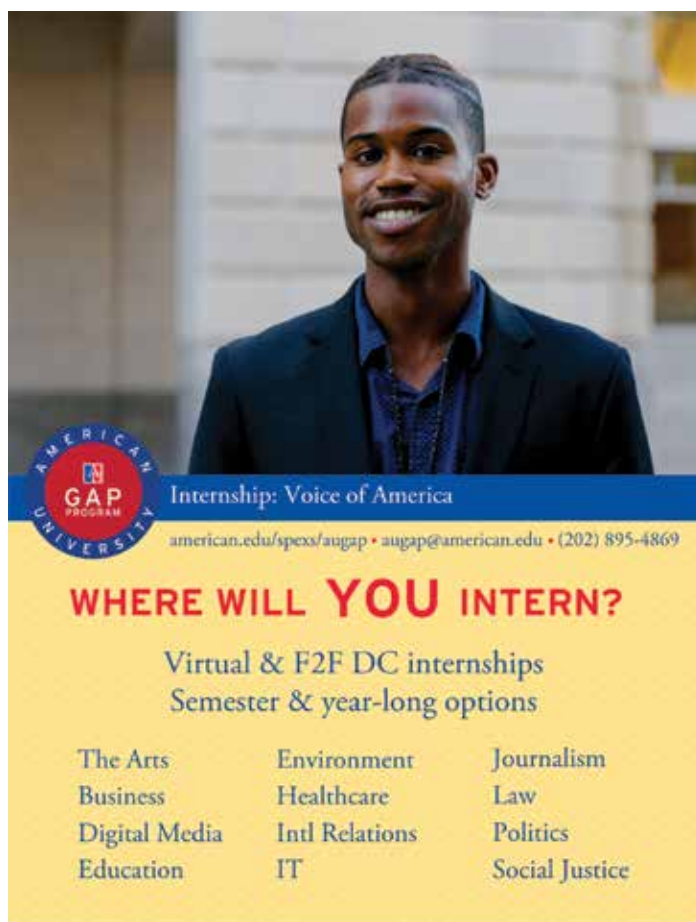
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current and past grades reports, and/or possibly prior standardized testing results to make decisions. In many cases, schools are moving away from the testing requirement or are test optional for this year. Therefore, it is more important for admission teams to understand the character and skill sets of your child. There are many ways to stay engaged during this virtual year. Send thank you notes, ask questions during open houses/tours, and encourage your child to engage in any school-sponsored special events being offered online.

Apply for financial aid early. Another key concern among parents is financial aid. Not only do more parents require aid due to the impact of the pandemic, more returning families are also in need. This leads to the questions: is aid available, and is applying to an independent school worth my time and resources?

The good news is that many independent schools have financial aid budgets, and schools are diligently working to support as many current and potentially new families as possible. It is critical to be in conversation with the admissions teams for your target schools in order to maximize your chances of getting as much aid as possible. Know that it is okay to ask about financial aid at the onset of your process. Also, talk to the financial aid counselor if you have specific questions about how to complete the form. Complete your financial aid package as thoroughly as possible. Be honest and offer clear explanations from the start. For example, when the form asks if you have additional information to add your financial narrative, tell it all! This will lessen the chances of a delay in the decision-making. 



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Lessons Learned: Successful International Programs in Boarding Schools

By Jon M. Harris, MA, IECA (PA)

Over the past few years, I have been asked to take on consulting assignments for boarding schools that are anxious to build robust international programs. I am sure that many of you, my fellow independent educational consultants (IECs), have been quizzed on this issue as well. These institutions want to educate for a globally connected world and they see the wisdom in bringing in students who will represent international diversity. It is hard to argue with this goal but I have found that many schools don't ask the right questions as they set out to accomplish this mission. Let me pose a few questions and share with you some thoughts about what I have learned.

From where should the initiative come?

This can be a fairly complex question and I have seen a broad range of responses. First, we should ask: is the initiative to begin an international program board

mandated, financially driven, academically inspired, or admissions motivated? In my experience, the schools with the most successful international programs are the ones in which the academic leaders took the lead. The administrators and teachers were the ones who developed the plan—the imperative, rationale, curriculum, and support. And, frankly, without it coming out of the academic side of the institution, the program will likely find very little traction. If boards try to start international programs, they must cross a boundary into operations. If the development office seizes the initiative, it can be seen as a cynical panacea for philanthropic dollars. And if the admissions team tries to solve its enrollment deficits with international students, it can be accused, albeit sometimes unfairly, of trying to undermine the culture of the school. For programs to truly flourish, the head of school and the school's administrative team should be the ones to keep it sustained and nourished.

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Jon M. Harris, Griffin Global Education Network, LLC, can be reached at jonharris@griffinglobaledu.com

How does one begin to find students?

A few years ago, I consulted with a school in the South that had a small international program, about 10 students, and they wanted to expand it. The community support was strong and so was the faculty endorsement. What to do? The head of school felt patience was indeed a virtue and that her international program leader needed the funds to travel overseas so he could talk directly with schools, consultants, students, and parents. The program leader was ideally suited for the job because he was not only a seasoned and charismatic teacher but he could also tell compelling stories about the international students who were already enrolled in the school. This gave him credibility and gravitas with whomever he met. In fact, I remember meeting him in a Beijing hotel and introducing him to other IECA members. Not only was he expanding his network by meeting with schools, parents, and students, he was building the brand of his school. Now, the school continues this “meet and greet” plan every year as it moves into new markets and the program keeps growing.

Where do schools fall short in developing a successful program?

First, be sure that the program has a designated leader and a superb team of professionals who have the time and resources to be effective. This is not a coaching assignment or one more class. Bringing in students from diverse cultures brings a whole set of issues that schools need to be fully prepared for.

Among the many questions that need to be addressed are:

- Who will be responsible for the visa and health forms?
- Who will be responsible for logistics to and from school?
- Will the dorms be open during long weekends and short vacations?
- Will there be language requirements for international students?
- Who will work with the food center for dietary needs and preferences?
- Will the school provide ESL support?

This is only a partial list of concerns that need to be addressed before beginning an international program. However, if the school is intentional about making sure that there is a core of devoted faculty members who will oversee all these issues and more, the benefits to the community will be significant.

A school needs to be in the position of stewarding its international students and families. By stewardship I mean taking care of the relationships that the school has with its international families and students.

How does one sustain an international program?

This question is an easy one to answer. A school needs to be in the position of stewarding its international students and families. By stewardship I mean taking care of the relationships that the school has with its international families and students.

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A New England school that has an outstanding program and a significant number of Chinese students makes sure that its program director and head of school both go to China once a year. Their goal is simply to thank parents for sending their children halfway across the world and entrusting them to the school's care. Not coincidentally, the school has also done extremely well philanthropically because the parents feel appreciated. It just makes sense to combine a goodwill tour with recognition of the importance of philanthropy to the livelihood of independent schools.

If the schools we work with are looking to start or to invigorate their international programs in order to seek more diversity in their communities, then shouldn't they be doing the same thing with the composition of their boards?

Another way to sustain relationships is to use social media and technology to stay connected with international families. For example, keep connected with occasional live video feeds from classrooms, send photos of a school play or an athletic contest, or encourage teachers and coaches to reach out with heartening words at times other than formal reporting periods. These are just a few of the creative ways to show care and concern.


What is the board's role?

As an IECA member and a board member of an independent day school, I think about this question a lot. The answer goes back to the first question posed in this article. If the

schools we work with are looking to start or to invigorate their international programs in order to seek more diversity in their communities, then shouldn't they be doing the same thing with the composition of their boards? Shouldn't boards reflect more closely their school communities? And shouldn't boards consider how their current students and families would feel when they know the school is staying true to its mission by making sure that its board is truly representative? Recently, I had an interesting conversation with a head of school who has a current parent from China on its board.

The parent has provided much needed insights on the academic ambitions of its Chinese students and been especially effective in helping the international families understand the importance of the annual fund and capital programs within the school. Additionally, the

parent has helped the school establish a strong following in China by hosting events and receptions in Beijing when the head of school visits. A board that includes representation from all constituencies is a central element of a successful international program.

I encourage schools to consider these sensible questions. They will generate creative and innovative reflection which, I hope, will lead to the formation of a successful program or to the practical enhancements of an existing one. In the end, responding to our clients' needs with astute and provocative questions will help them design programs that will improve the quality of the experiences of current and future students. 



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Vietnam: A Promising Yet Challenging Market

By Huong Nguyen, IECA (Vietnam)

As an independent educational consultant (IEC) and also a parent, I always want my students to learn and experience in the best environment, gain knowledge and skills to become independent individuals, learn to think for themselves, and strive to succeed after graduating from college. I firmly believe that the right kind of education, school, and pedagogy will help the child develop to the maximum of their abilities, enjoy career success, and live a fulfilled life. Years of experience working with Vietnamese students in both public and private schools have motivated me to constantly strengthen my professional knowledge and improve my expertise to help them.

Currently the Vietnamese educational system has many types of schools with different curricula. Specifically, there are two broad categories: public and private. The Vietnamese public school system must follow the national curriculum regulated by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. A typical description of these schools includes large numbers of students, large class sizes, crowded classrooms, a shortage of teaching staff, and limited teaching resources, with a few exceptions

in major cities. In addition, in public schools, the application of science and technology has not been popularized in teaching and learning. Instead, the traditional method of learning/teaching has been maintained for many years and is slow to update or fundamentally renovate. Despite these challenges, students from public schools tend to be highly motivated to learn and have the ability to compete, quickly integrate, and adapt to the new environment. However, due to limited facilities and resources, combined with a number of limitations as mentioned above, public school students often lack some essential soft skills such as time management, leadership skills, critical thinking, reflection, communication skills, and emotional management.

Private schools in Vietnam are now focusing on overcoming the weaknesses of public schools and providing students with a more modern teaching/learning method, applying technologies and scientific tools in learning, enriching students' life skills, and reducing the study workload. Students at these schools have an array of extracurricular activities, sports, clubs, and after-school events to participate in. They are generally more adaptive




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Professional Academic
Counseling, can
be reached at
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and flexible with their communication and manner, express themselves confidently, and exhibit positive habits that have been fostered from an early age such as reading, time management, and problem solving.

Within a typical Vietnamese school, an exclusive position of educational advisor/university counselor rarely exists, except for international schools. High school students seeking overseas study opportunities often resort to information, experience, or personal sharing from previous students or study-abroad agents. If lucky, they might have a subject teacher—usually an English teacher—who is dedicated enough to help students on the side with basic services. Therefore, the information sources about studying abroad available to Vietnamese students are more than often incorrect, out-of-date, or inundated with myths and rumors.

With that in mind, there is an opportunity for independent educational consultants like myself to build support services to complement this shortage. We can help students understand themselves, explore their personalities and abilities, and navigate a long-term orientation about careers and programs to study. We can also offer them skill training courses such as note taking skills, time management, and academic writing.

We can work for the best interest of our students, helping high schools set up their counseling services, opening the doors for direct recruitment from universities and colleges. With the network of professional colleagues from both admission and high school sides, we can bring counselors from different schools together and help students for their own benefits. 

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Thank You for Your Support in 2020!

We want our most dedicated supporters to know how much they mean to us. Therefore, in 2018, we created a new loyalty group: the Circle 96 Society.



Why Circle 96 Society?

The work of the IECA Foundation is cyclical, with grantmaking happening annually. We believe the image of a circle aligns perfectly with this process, as well as the idea of a dedicated circle of donors. The 96 is in reference to the founding year of the IECA Foundation.

Members of the Circle 96 Society will be the first to hear about upcoming IECA Foundation events and opportunities, as well as receive invitations for Circle 96 gatherings at future conferences. We are excited to welcome new members to the Circle 96 Society and look forward to seeing this group of supporters grow! We extend special gratitude to our members, listed below, for their steadfast support of the IECA Foundation.

Richard and Robin Abedon
The Angelo Family Charitable Foundation
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Regional Groups

Schools, colleges, and programs that are interested in meeting with IECA members, virtually or in person, are encouraged to reach out to our Regional Groups. You can find a list of IECA's Regional Groups at: iecaonline.com/ieca-regional-groups

Austin, TX

The Austin Regional Group has set its schedule for 2021. All meetings take place at 10:00 a.m. (CT) on the second Wednesday of each month via Zoom. We do not meet during the summer (June and July). Contact: Deb Davis Groves (deb@davisgrovesedu.com)

Charlotte, NC

The Charlotte Regional Group started meeting weekly via Zoom during the pandemic and has recently transitioned to twice a month Zoom meetings. In addition to providing support and guidance for each other, we have also participated in professional development with presentations from Jed Applerouth, College Planner Pro, Corsava, and college reps. We are a welcoming group and have regulars that join us from outside of the Charlotte area who might not have access to a group in their area. Contact: Katie Garrett (katie@garretteducationalconsulting.com)

Chicago, IL

All Chicagoland IECs are welcome to join our Regional Group. In 2020, we made members aware of over 200 events, including info sessions with regional admissions reps, tutoring companies, summer/gap providers, and other relevant continuing education programs. We run an active Facebook group with almost 90 members of all experience levels, plan programming (such as our annual season debrief), and have initiated a new monthly virtual hangout, a Zoom session where fellow IECs gather with questions and conversation topics of their choosing. Contact: Tina Tranfaglia (tina@CollegeKnowledgeLLC.com)

New Jersey

The NJ Regional Group is excited for 2021. The pandemic has not slowed our enthusiasm for bringing engaging topics and discussions to our IECs. We are honored that Judy Berg was our opening educational speaker in January, on "Reframing Negative Thinking," providing counseling tips. We have already lined up over six colleges to speak as well as a program on gap years, all in the first quarter of the year. We are moving into 2021 with a positive attitude and lots of gratitude for IECA and our IECA peers. Contact: Hildie Steiner (hildie@highfivecollegeprep.com) or Shari Powell (creatingcollegeoptions@gmail.com)



North Jersey Hudson Valley

The North Jersey Hudson Valley Regional Group will commence its 2021 program on February 23 at 12:30 p.m. (ET) via Zoom. Contact: Liz Levine (liz@signaturecollegecounseling.com) or Debbie Cinquemani (debbie@guideusinc.com)

Northeast New England

Beginning in January, the Northern New England Regional Group launched a monthly virtual "Lunch and Learn" series featuring guest speakers from college and independent high school admissions offices as well as discussions on a variety of topics ranging from postgraduate years to best business practices and beyond. Contact: Marie Lucca (marie@crimsoned.com) or Adela Penagos (apenagos@futuroenlightened.com)

OH/MI/Western PA

Our Regional Group meets via Zoom monthly (with a summer break June through August). Upcoming meetings feature talks with Marisa DeMarco-Constanzo, co-founder of Ivy and Quill, a college essay editing service, and with representatives from Union College, the University of Michigan, and the College for Creative Studies. Contact: Jason Vallozzi (jason@campustocareercrossroads.com)

continued on page 24

Philadelphia, PA

The Philadelphia Regional Group enjoyed a robust schedule of college admission webinars and online discussions this past fall, thanks in large part of to the engagement and support of our membership and as well as our entire IEC community and networks. Looking to 2021, we will continue to develop programs with a focus on issues impacting our regional business practices. The group will continue to meet virtually until it's safe to gather in person. Contact: Fran Manning-Smith (fran@steplanners.com)

Raleigh, NC

The Raleigh-Research Triangle Park Regional Group continues to meet via Zoom on the third Thursday of the month at 11:00 a.m. (ET). Recent meetings have featured a college essay workshop and guest speaker Dr. Kristen Wynns, a child and adolescent psychologist, who discussed the topic "Balancing the Seesaw: Meeting the Needs of Students and Their Parents," providing valuable insights relevant to our work as IECs. In December, we celebrated our work with a virtual happy hour along with an Indian cooking demonstration and a cool icebreaker activity to get to know each other outside of being an IEC. Contact: Manjiri Sethna (bewisec@gmail.com)

San Diego, CA

Happy New Year from the San Diego Regional Group! We had a busy 2020 despite shifting to online meetings due to the pandemic. We had many informative meetings with college admission directors from Oregon State University, University of Colorado Boulder, Denison University, Azusa Pacific University, St Mary's College of California, Johnson and Wales University, California Lutheran University, Boise State University, Scripps College, and Gonzaga University. In April, we met with the Orange County Regional Group for what has become a yearly tradition to discuss admission outcomes. We also had presentations from Paul Rivas on time management skills and Peg Keough on financial aid. We're looking forward to a busy 2021, starting off with a gap year presentation. Contact: Jackie Woolley, Gina Gerrato, and Jeanette Wright (IECASDRegionalGroupCoordinator@gmail.com)

Westchester, NY

The Westchester Regional Group met on December 21 to discuss what happened during this year's Early Decision and Early Action cycle, and what we plan to tell our students about what we've learned and expect to happen this spring. Stephanie Klein Wassink, regional coordinator for Fairfield County, and Westchester group coordinator, Alan Sheptin, spoke to discuss how the two committees can create more synergies going forward. Contact: Alan Sheptin (alan@sheptin.com)

Europe

Our main goal at the European Regional Group rests on two main components: 1. Host webinars about European colleges and universities for the IECA community at large, and 2. Support the European Regional Group members through professional development. We have had webinars hosted by Franklin University, John Cabot University, and Globe Business College Munich. The aim is to reach as many European colleges and universities as possible. This task is jointly organized with the IECA Global Committee, which administers the Global College Conversations.

Secondly, co-chair Yesim Erez and I are actively involved in finding professionals who provide another perspective to the work we do. As we survey the group about topics of interest, members with a specific know-how are encouraged to present. We also seek experts in testing, essay writing for international and ESL students, study skills and admissions trends, and other fields. During my tenure as chair, I hope to provide my colleagues with a different perspective for college list options for students willing to take risks. Contact: Jean Louis (jean@louisedconsulting.com) or Yesim Erez (yesimerez@admittanceeducation.com)

The webinars presented by IECA have been a great source of information in managing the COVID-19 uncertainties.

Turkey

The webinars presented by IECA have been a great source of information in managing the COVID-19 uncertainties. We are active in the High School Counselor Turkey Group, sharing our up-to-date information gathered from IECA resources. Due to the pandemic, we were able to have phone call meetings with some members. I gave information about our organization and how to be an ethical independent counselor to my classmates from ACG'69.

Meral Bolak Gurol gave a Zoom presentation on December 16, 2020 to an audience of parents, coaches, and students on the positive effects of early involvement with athletics, especially team sports, on children and adolescents.

Gulesen Odabasoglu has taken a position as the director of international education counseling at TED Ronesans High School in Istanbul. She has held many online events for the students and parents during the remote education period on studying in the US and abroad in general. Contact: Nazan Kabatepe (nazankabatepe@erkagroup.com). 🇹🇷




In the News

Ibrahim Firat (TX) was interviewed for the segment “Nearly half of Houston ISD students struggle through first grading period” on KHOU11 on December 2, 2020. He was also referenced in “Education Through the Pandemic: From Florida’s Remote Learners Falling Behind In-Person Peers to Houston Schools Scoring Record Failure Rates, 9 Ways States & Educators Are Coping With COVID-19” in the 74 on January 4, 2021.

Laurie Kopp Weingarten (NJ) was quoted in “Merit Aid is Crucial to Your Kid’s College Decision. Here’s Why.” in *Benzinga* on December 8, 2020 and in “Effect of an Education Equation Changed by COVID for College-Bound Students” in the December 2020 issue of *Western NY Family* magazine.

Stephanie Ackerman (Associate, NJ) was quoted in “‘It Was a Joke’: Some Small Businesses Got \$1 Relief Loans” in the *New York Times* on January 11, 2021.

Janet Rosier (Emeritus, CT) wrote “Jill Biden deserves to use Dr. in her name,” published in the Hearst newspaper the *Hour* on December 27, 2020.


An announcement about **Sydney Montgomery** (Associate, MD) receiving the IECA Making a Difference Award was published in the *Maryland Daily Record* on January 7, 2021. 



Initiatives

Carolyn Mulligan (NJ) presented on the “College Search Process for Students with Disabilities” during Homecoming for the Windward School, in New York City and White Plains, NY, on November 18, 2020. This is the third year she has been part of the Windward Homecoming, but the first year virtually due to the pandemic.

Congratulations to **Erin Avery** (NJ) and **Katelyn Klapper** (MA), who have received the Distinguished Instructor of the Year awards from the University of California Irvine Division of Continuing Education for their work in the Independent Educational Consultant Certificate Program. We are fortunate to have them in the IECA community and are thankful for their continued contributions to the advancement of the profession.

Jason Robinovitz (FL) has teamed up with a group of test prep professionals from across the country to form the first non-profit industry group to support the test prep industry, the National Test Prep Association. It’s the NTPA’s mission to foster collaboration among test prep providers in an effort to promote, support, and develop the professional activities of test preparation providers; to share best practices, effective use of materials, and professional standards in the industry; and to advocate for the appropriate administration and use of standardized tests for admissions and assessment purposes. 

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Introductions

Please Welcome IECA's New Professional Members



Kathryn (Kat) Clowes (CA) has been an IEC for 10 years and was an associate member. Previously, she worked as a project manager for PG&E and as a costume designer for Bakersfield College.

Clowes holds an MBA from Mt. St. Mary's University, a BA from Santa Clara University, and an Educational Consulting Certificate from UC Irvine-Extension. She completed her Myers-Briggs Certification in January 2021. Clowes attended the 2013 IECA Summer Training Institute and is a member of WACAC and Rotary International.

Clowes is the author of *Put College to Work* and co-author of *Managing Generation Z* (to be published in April 2021), and chair of the Bakersfield Leadership and Ethics Conference.

*Kathryn Clowes, MBA
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Julia Ross (VA) has been an IEC for 26 years and in that time has instructed over 5,000 students in math, science, writing, and foreign languages and guided more than 750 students through the college application process. Previously, Ross worked as a team leader in urban and facilities planning for the GSA.

Ross earned a master's of urban and environmental planning and a BA in French language and literature from the University of Virginia, and attended a direct matriculation at the University of Paris a la Sorbonne. She is a member of NACAC, PCACAC, and the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO).

Ross has developed and delivered over 100 seminars on college admissions and scholarships for NACAC, AACRAO, and local community organizations and written three nationally published books. She volunteers with at-risk students in Fairfax County Public Schools and has hosted more than 50 exchange students and foster children.

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Melinda Kelly (OH) has been an IEC for six years and was an associate member. She has served as adjunct faculty for Ashland University, Indiana Wesleyan University, and the University of Cincinnati. She has also worked as an educational administrator, coordinator of gifted education, and district crisis counselor.

Kelly earned an EdD from South Carolina State University, a Gifted Ed. Endorsement from Xavier University, an MA from Webster University, and an EdS and BS from South Carolina State University. She attended the 2017 IECA Summer Training Institute.

Kelly is a member of AERA, OACAC, and NACAC. She holds a Cultural Intelligence Certification, is a facilitator for the Rotary Leadership Institute, and serves on the board of the Rotary Club of Cincinnati and Magnified Giving, a philanthropic organization for youth.

*Melinda Kelly, EdD
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John Valenzuela (CA) has been an IEC for one year. Previously, he worked as dean of admissions for American University Preparatory School; international admissions and diversity coordinator for Objai Valley School; associate director of admissions for Pacifica Graduate Institute; and director of operations for Concord Law School.

Valenzuela holds a PhD in clinical psychology from Pacifica Graduate School, an MS in instructional design for online learning from Capella University, and a BA in psychology from UCLA. He is a member of the American Psychological Association and the National Latinx Psychological Association. He has worked with international students in the development of Explore Academy and urban community service projects in downtown LA, and as event director of Relay for Life.

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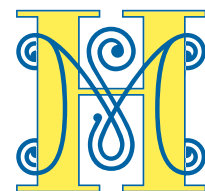
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The Ten Pillars of College Consulting Excellence

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The Ten Pillars of College Consulting Excellence, Part Two

By Steven R. Antonoff, PhD, CEP, IECA (CO)

There are 10 concepts that I consider the pillars of independent educational consulting. Pillars I through III are Student, Time, and Match. [Note: see the December 2020/January 2021 issue of *Insights* for Part One of this article series.]

Pillar IV: Judgment

As an independent educational consultant (IEC), I am paid for my judgment—nothing more, nothing less. I am paid for judgment informed by my years of learning, my expertise, and my engagement with the profession. I offer my clients advice and counsel but no assurance of admission. I am not paid to nag, write essays, complete applications at the last minute, make up for students' shortcomings, influence admission officials, admonish students to grow up, provide them with therapy, serve as a travel agent, or strategize how to get into Yale.

There are many aspects of college selection—such as admission decisions—that are beyond our control as IECs. What we can control is how we expand and strengthen our good judgment, continually striving to make that judgment more helpful to our clients. They should be able to count on us for informed, up-to-date advice and guidance. They should be able to rely on our expertise and knowledge to help their students solve problems, attain goals, and successfully navigate the college selection process.

Pillar V: Teacher

Independent educational consultant: the word “education” is in that title because we are teachers. As IECs, we educate our students on a wide variety of topics.

The mark of a great teacher is not just having answers for every question (or at least knowing

where to find them). A great teacher is one who

- communicates effectively;
- is adept at cutting big tasks into smaller, manageable ones;
- explains a process and puts it into context;
- helps students see the big picture; and
- recognizes and appreciates the positive attributes of each student.

Certainly, all of these attributes are the mark of a successful IEC.



And what is it that we teach? It's not just imparting hard facts about colleges and admissions. We also teach that selecting a college is more than targeting a career; notably, it's about finding a place where the student will learn critical thinking, analysis, discernment, retrieval, resilience, and reflection.

It's also about

finding an environment where the student will learn to separate fact from fiction and science from nonsense; come to appreciate differences in appearance, value, and attitude; and develop fairness and compassion.

As IECs, we also teach about decision-making—how to define the problem, gather information, develop alternatives, weigh alternatives, brainstorm, prioritize, and more. We teach about consumerism and how to be a good researcher, one who recognizes a sales pitch disguised as fact and realizes that *US News & World Report* is an imperfect vehicle for delivering information about a good college match.

We teach about the value of self-assessment and the importance of self-advocacy. We teach about empowerment, both by our example and by encouraging students to do the hard work of applying to colleges. IECs can and should offer strategies and counsel that can help lighten the load. However, when the consultant takes on a task that is

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The FAFSA Gets Simplified—But Will It Help?

By Jeff Levy, CEP, IECA (CA)

A month before the end of his final term, 80-year-old Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee) received the best retirement present he could ask for. As chair of the Senate Education Committee, he had been trying for years to simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, commonly called the FAFSA. Though his Democratic counterpart Senator Patty Murray (D-Washington) wanted to tie FAFSA simplification to amending the Higher Education Act—specifically, to strip it of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos's provisions giving greater protections to those accused of campus sexual assault and harassment—Alexander got his way. The FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020 became a 167-page insert to the 5,593-page COVID-19 relief package when it passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by President Trump on December 27, 2020.

But simplifying the FAFSA isn't simple. The form is just an interface that sits atop a 27-page formula whose results instruct 1,300 employees on how to disburse federal student aid to 13 million students attending 6,000 colleges and career schools. Changing the FAFSA will take time, and the new rules won't go into effect until July 1, 2023, the first day of the 2023-2024 school year. The new version of the form will be available October 1, 2022 for students who are currently sophomores in high school.

Most agree that the FAFSA needed a makeover. Last year, only 61 percent of graduating seniors submitted the application for federal aid. By reducing the number of questions from 108 to about 40, the hope is that the simplified FAFSA will be easier to submit. But alongside simplicity is affordability, an even bigger chasm preventing poor and marginalized students from achieving a college degree. So how does the new FAFSA measure up?

Some Important Positive Changes

- Scraps the term Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and replaces it with Student Aid Index (SAI). Many parents are misled into thinking their EFC is what they will have to pay for college, when often the real figure is significantly higher. The new system

will be less misleading but will not reveal any sooner, nor more accurately, what a family's actual costs will be at any institution.

- Changes how cost of attendance (COA) is defined. Under the new law, COA will include tuition and fees, housing and meals (previously called room and board), books and other course materials, transportation, personal expenses, loan fees (for those receiving federal student and parent loans), and any costs associated with obtaining professional licensure, certification, or credentials.



- Stipulates that the itemized cost of attendance must be disclosed on each institution's website, an important improvement over the current lack of consistency.
- Expands eligibility for Pell Grants, including incarcerated students. Additionally, changes to the calculation of SAI will make it easier to identify the neediest students.
- Increases the parent Income Protection Allowance (IPA), the portion of income shielded from the SAI calculation. For a three-person family, this will increase 20 percent to \$29,040.
- Increases the dependent student IPA from \$6,970 (for the 2021-2022 year) to \$9,410, a jump of 35 percent. Since student income beyond the IPA amount is assessed at a massive 50 percent by the federal methodology, this removes much of the disincentive against student part-time or summer employment.



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the student's responsibility, the consultant strips away the student's personal power and creates an unhealthy codependency.

We also teach students (and sometimes parents) how to prepare for and meet the challenge of becoming independent of parents. And finally, we teach students to cut themselves some slack and allow themselves the luxury of a little confusion during the college planning months.

Pillar VI: Student of Colleges

IECs are not only teachers but also learners. In order to serve our clients professionally, effectively, and confidently, we must be students—specifically students of colleges and the selection process. We should set a goal of being more knowledgeable next month than we are today. That goal can only be achieved if we have a plan in place to acquire knowledge.

The body of knowledge in our field includes knowledge of students and families, knowledge of postsecondary options and the admission process, and knowledge of specific colleges and universities. We must be well-versed on a wide range of institutions. To ensure the accuracy of our knowledge, we must test our college perceptions and our impressions with colleagues. The depth and breadth of our knowledge should be such that we are able to articulate distinctions between colleges that from the outside may appear quite similar.

What separates the professional IEC from the novice is learning and keeping up with the literature. In *A Student of Colleges*, I make a distinction between knowledge-based and process-based consultants:

For a profession to thrive, there must be a body of information, and there must be encouragement for the knowledge-focused side. If the consultant cannot explain differences from one campus to the next, if the consultant is not able to articulate how these differences affect the student experience, or if the consultant is not versed in the "culture" of specific colleges, then that consultant is operating against the principles necessary for independent educational consulting to grow and flourish as a unique, specialized profession.

Our opinions must be grounded in well-developed and well-researched knowledge. It is knowledge that separates the opinions of the professional consultant from those of self-professed "consultants." Colleges are complex and defy simple generalizations. IECs are uniquely positioned to be college knowledge experts.

Again, from *A Student of Colleges*:

When do you have enough knowledge? On one level, the answer is that there is always more to learn. On another level, the answer comes from the ability to say that you are immersing yourself into the field and that you have a game plan for learning. The ability to differentiate among hundreds of colleges is a lifetime in the making; the knowledge required to truly go beyond The Fiske Guide to Colleges and know differences among collegiate

environments is immense. The stone is never completely polished. As students of colleges, we actively consume college knowledge. For most of us, the challenge of mastery is amazingly fulfilling.

There are more opportunities than ever to build our knowledge base. Visiting colleges is the primary approach, but other avenues include: joining a professional association; earning a professional certificate; attending meetings, institutes, and summer programs; earning an advanced degree; pursuing specialized certificates (for example, in Myers-Briggs or Strong); accessing webinars, blogs, podcasts; earning the Certified Educational Planner designation; and importantly, talking, listening, and sharing.



As I say in *A Student of Colleges*, "Knowledge is our holy grail, and no holy grail is attained without effort and dedication. As students of colleges, we must yearn to learn and be active and engaged in our quest for the holy grail."

Pillar VII: Wisdom

I believe that as IECs we should spend at least 20 percent (and maybe more) of our time with students imparting wisdom rather than simple facts. Some of my greatest consultant moments as an IEC have come when I brought to the college planning table deep insights and revelations gained over the course of my career. Details of the college admission process are important, but I'd hate to see IECs get lost in the weeds. An inordinate amount of time spent detailing picayune aspects of completing the Common Application, for example, takes precious time away imparting real, life-changing observations to our students.

Here are some examples of the wisdom we share with our students:

- Picking a college is not just about what you'll do when you graduate; instead, it's about the four years you spend there and the experiences you accumulate.
- The value of a college education is determined not by the name of the institution on your diploma by whether you choose to take advantage of the resources available to you.
- The college or university that can provide you with a happy and fulfilling four years is not limited to just one school or even one group of schools.
- Your college search should focus more on educational aspects and less on admission concerns.
- Don't panic if you're uncertain of your major; consider yourself not "undeclared" but rather "multi-interested."
- Never lose sight of the following statistic: 75 percent of colleges accept over 75 percent of applicants.

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- Increases the independent unmarried student IPA from \$10,840 (2021-2022 school year) to \$14,630, a jump of 35 percent.
- Substantially changes the law regarding divorced or separated parents. It scraps the current standard of “the parent you lived with more during the past 12 months.” Under the new law, the parent who provides more financial support will be the parent required to report income and assets on the FAFSA. This will close a loophole regularly exploited by divorced and separated parents.
- Renames Simplified Needs Test to the more accurate Applicants Exempt from Asset Reporting. Makes qualifying easier by raising the adjusted gross income cutoff from \$50,000 to \$60,000, providing that the applicant also meets other tax filing requirements.
- Prohibits colleges and financial aid administrators from maintaining a policy that denies all financial aid appeals.
- Expands the authority of financial aid administrators to exercise professional judgment and allows them to consider a broader range of special circumstances including natural disasters, national emergencies, recession or economic downturn, and substantial losses in business, investments, and real estate.
- Reduces barriers for homeless youth and foster care youth to access federal financial aid.
- Amends the definition of independent student to also include situations in which the student is unable to contact the parent or where contact would pose a risk to the student.
- Allows a FAFSA filer to import all of the student and parent identifying non-financial information from a prior year's FAFSA, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.
- Removes the suspension of federal student aid eligibility for those convicted of drug-related offenses.
- Removes the requirement that male students register with the selective service system.
- Forgives the debt balance of all HBCU Capital Financing loans.

Some Rules That Remain Unchanged

- No change to the way parent available assets will be calculated, a net maximum of 5.64 percent.
- No change to the way student assets are calculated at 20 percent of total assets.
- Unfortunately, no change to the Asset Protection Allowance (APA) table, whose amounts have been steadily declining over many years. For the 2021-2022 school year, the APA for a two-parent household in which the older parent is 50 is \$7,000. Ten years ago, it was \$48,800. Mark Kantrowitz suggests that the APA may disappear altogether in the years ahead.

New Items That are Deeply Concerning

- Adds a category of dependent students who are not exempt from asset reporting. This includes those citizens and eligible non-citizens who do not reside in the US or territories, and those who do not file taxes in the US or territories unless they are non-filers due to low income.
- In a major setback for many families, the FAFSA will no longer divide the parent assessment by the number of family members in college. This change will substantially reduce financial aid eligibility for those families with multiple family members in college simultaneously. Mark Kantrowitz suggests this was not an oversight.
- Prohibits any third party from charging a fee to help complete the FAFSA.

The health of American higher education is in jeopardy.

Will It Help?

The health of American higher education is in jeopardy. Comparing the percentage of 25-34-year-olds who hold a postsecondary degree, we are 10th in the world and falling. Comparing the cost of tuition at public institutions granting bachelor's degrees, we are the second most expensive in the world. These two facts cannot, of course, be disconnected.

Taken as a whole, the simplified FAFSA will be an improvement over the current model. If more students successfully submit the form, the hope is that more high school graduates will enroll in college. If more Pell-eligible students are identified and supported, it will make college a little more affordable for those with the greatest need. As a larger portion of student income is protected from the federal methodology, the hope is that more students will be incentivized to find part-time and summer employment in order to save for college. Yet the FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020 does little to lower the cost of a college degree for the overwhelming majority of students, and in some cases will make it substantially more expensive. We have much more work to do. 🙄

Primary resources consulted for this piece:

Text of Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, pages 5139-5307: link.iecaonline.com/Consolidated-Appropriations-Act-2021

Association of American Universities – FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020 Section by Section Summary: link.iecaonline.com/FAFSA-2020-Simplification-Act-summary

“Pandemic Relief Package Simplifies FAFSA,” by Mark Kantrowitz, *Forbes*, December 22, 2020: studentaidpolicy.com/pandemic-relief-package-simplifies-fafsa.html

“A Last Push for Simplicity,” by Kery Murakami, *Inside Higher Ed*, September 18, 2020: insidehighered.com/news/2020/09/18/alexander-prepares-leave-final-push-simplify-fafsa

- Always remember you are more than your test scores, and the SAT and ACT are not intelligence tests.
- The more you look for fit and match (rather than name or prestige), the less stress you'll feel and the fewer tears you'll shed.
- You have more than 100 truly elite colleges in the United States to choose from.
- Your grit, passion, and perseverance will impact your college experience and success in life far more than your IQ, class rank, or popularity in high school and college do.

Pillar VIII: Professionalism

In every moment of our careers as IECs, we are representing the profession. The field of independent educational consulting is still a young profession, and we must not leave its future to chance. It is up to each of us to help shape and advance that future. If we don't, we open the door to let unscrupulous, unethical, and even criminal "consultants" define who we are and what we do. Along these same lines, we don't want to be defined by school-based counselors or admission officers. To ward off misperceptions and ignorance about our work and accurately portray the important work we do, it is essential that we define ourselves.

We can seek office, contribute to committees, and lead sessions at conferences. We can write articles about the field and inform the world about the true value of our work. We can respond to misinformation published in print or online by providing countering facts and statistics.

There are many ways to help achieve this goal. We need to take part in professional activities. We can seek office, contribute to committees, and lead sessions at conferences. We can write articles about the field and inform the world about the true value of our work. We can respond to misinformation published in print or online by providing countering facts and statistics. All of us have skills, knowledge, and insights that will help others; we need to find ways to disseminate that information.

If we want respect as professionals, we must be a part of groups of professionals who work to advance the field. We need to be affiliated. What hurts our profession most are the "phantom consultants" out there. They may be self-proclaimed "experts" who assiduously avoid professional affiliation and thus have no connection and no ethical base. If you know one or two of them, do your best to rein them in and get them to the association table.

We have a responsibility to uphold the integrity of our profession. A few years ago, a consultant from Denver asked me at the Summer Training Institute if I viewed her as a threat. If she practices ethically, she's no threat to me. Prospective clients will explore their options; my Denver colleague will attract some families, and I'll attract others. What will not only hurt me and but also threaten my livelihood and reputation is the consultant who is unethical or promises more than he or she can deliver. These so-called "consultants" can cause inestimable damage to the field's growing reputation.

Pillar IX: Decency

Ethics are moral principles that form the basis for codes of conduct. Such codes are essential. Decency refers to our behavior, what we do each day in terms of our interactions with students, parents, and colleagues.

Many best practices in the field of educational consulting are grounded in simple decency. It is best practice to never take advantage of the vulnerability of students or parents going through a life change that is often stressful. It is best practice to accept and respect our clients as they are and work to change their mindset only with regard to the colleges and the admission process.

It is best practice for all of us to be entirely clear about the role we play as IECs. In my comments regarding Pillar IV, Judgment, I enumerated many functions I am not paid to provide. To add to that list, it is not our task to "fix" student weaknesses, market the student, or game the admission process. It's best practice to offer a positive voice in the dialogue in the transition between high school and college. It's best practice to not fudge it when we don't know an answer.

It's best practice to represent colleges fairly, honestly, and without bias. It's best practice to honor the unique gifts in every student. It's best practice that we recognize and help our clients recognize that getting into Wooster is just as significant as admission to Swarthmore and can have equal or greater educational value.

It's best practice to accept only those clients for whom we have the requisite experience and competence to serve successfully.

And it is best practice to stop seeing a family if there is a significant disconnect between our idea of decency and theirs. I cannot control what families do outside my office, but I do control with whom I will share my advice (and my condemnation should the student or the family even appear to be contemplating an ethical lapse).

Pillar X: Access

Access to independent educational consultation should be a concern for all of us. I'm using access here to suggest offering our knowledge and experience to those who may not have the ability or funds to seek out our services or who may not even know that we exist. There is a world of college shoppers out there that could use our help. Of course, there will always be a need to assist and counsel students in affluent school districts and students from privileged families. But that population makes up less than five percent of college shoppers. How often do we think about the other 95 percent? My sense is that the answer would be, "not often enough." These young people need our advice and direction.

Societal demographics are changing, and we need to cast a wider net for students and families that we can help. We can't afford to lose bright minds and eager learners by denying them tools that could help them move on to higher education and succeed. And with more IECs entering the field every year, there are more hands on deck to take on this challenge.

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Business or Ethics? Exploring the Gray Areas

By Belinda Wilkerson, EdD, IECA VP for Ethics & Professional Practices (NC)

One of my “vacation” activities during the Christmas break involved reviewing ethics concerns from the past five years. Amazingly, when reviewing the Ethics Committee reports from this time period, similar concerns show up annually. When comparing the notes of the Ethics Committees from 2015 through 2020, it appears similar questions and concerns repeat themselves over the years. This may be due to new IECA members who are less

familiar with the *Principles of Good Practice* (PGP), but even more clear is the care and concern of our members to want to practice ethically. Many of the inquiries are from members wanting to ensure that a business practice they are considering is in alignment with our *Principles of Good Practices*. Let’s look at a few of those concerns, some with gray areas and as Joe Friday would say, “Just the facts, ma’am.”

Case 1. A test prep organization invites an IEC to give a college planning session for an event they are hosting. As part of the conversation, the organization offers to pay the IEC a referral fee for each attendee that signs up with the company. The IEC, knowing the PGP has language about referral fees, asks the office if accepting the fees is in violation of our ethical guide. Part of the PGP states in **Section V.B., Relationships with Other Independent Educational Consultants**, “...nor do they accept remuneration for referring clients to other consultants or other related professionals, unless such relationships involve ongoing coordination, responsibility, and oversight for delivery of services.” Questions about referrals are in the top three of concerns of our members. Why this is IECA’s policy? The explanation is a family hires an IEC to provide contracted services with the expectation all decisions are in the best interest of the student. Accepting a referral fee may give the appearance of a conflict of interest. How can a family know for sure that referral is in a student’s best interest when money has exchanged hands? Sounds harsh, right? In NACAC’s *Guide to Ethical Practice*



in *College Admission* (September 2020, bit.ly/ieca_ethics1), **Section B. Professional Conduct: Guiding Principles and Rationale**, there is similar language in the second bullet, *Recommended Practices for Implementation*. In this particular case, referral fees would not be an issue. Why? The potential attendees are not clients of the IEC; they are participants in an event for another organization. There is no conflict of interest.

Case 2. A member reports an inappropriate use of the IECA logo on a group practice website. According to the member’s report, a 10-member practice is displaying the IECA logo on its website. Now, this member was not randomly checking websites. This was a reaction to a mailing the member received via a family member’s school advertising the group’s services. When the member conducted some initial research, they determined at least one member of the group practice did not belong to IECA. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that out of the approximately 10 members of the group, only two were members of IECA. The IECA staff received notification of this violation, informed the IECA members of this violation and the group practice corrected the information. The PGP–**Section VI.C–Advertising and Other Public Statements**: Members are familiar with and strictly adhere to the “IECA Logo Usage Guidelines,” found on the IECA website at link.iecaonline.com/logo-guidelines. No shades of gray in this case.



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Ten Pillars, from page M6

Yes, this is a plea urging you to seek students of color in your practice, but even more it is a plea to seek out students of any race or background who rarely see the inside of an IEC's office. Students from lower performing public high schools, for one example, or international students, for another. Ours is not a profession for the privileged, despite how the tabloids have tried to portray us. We share our knowledge with a wide range of students and families. Now we need to ask what can each of us do to reach out to great students in Spokane or Flint or Birmingham (Alabama and West Midlands) or even Bogotá. Have we contacted organizations that can put us in touch with LGBTQ, homeschooled, or physically challenged students? Are we familiar with HBCUs, Tribal colleges, and schools where a Latina or Latino student is comfortable?

We also need to actively recruit diversity into our profession. The more our profession resembles the America of today, the more respected we will be. We can facilitate recruitment by actively advertising our availability to mentor someone new to the field. In talking up our lives and our work as IECs, we can introduce a school-based counselor or a college admission officer to the profession.

I am happy and proud that many of us have already chosen to do pro bono work, and I encourage that to continue. Although accepting pro bono clients is a wonderful start, it isn't enough. In other words, we should not be content with providing free services to one of our students each year or initiating a couple of great outreach efforts. My hope is that all of us will think more proactively and broadly about not only seeking a wide range of students but also building the diversity of our profession.

There you have them: the 10 pillars, the foundation of a college consulting practice that is not only successful but also satisfying.

Our work deals with one of the most exciting stages of life, one that touches on human potential, choice, hopes, dreams, and the idea that there is a place for everyone. What I haven't mentioned is the joy of consulting. We laugh a lot—with students, parents, and colleagues. Working with teenagers may be a challenge, but it's also

fun and anti-aging. And if you don't absolutely enjoy learning about the incredible variety of colleges and universities out there, all I can say is friend, you're in the wrong profession.

I love being my own boss, setting my own hours, and determining my practice boundaries. I like the feeling of being good at my work. I'm happy to have something of substance to offer other people and society at large. I find it invigorating to continue to learn. I enjoy witnessing change. I thrive when I'm working with colleagues and have a support system.



I particularly love solving puzzles and the challenge of figuring out the best fit for each of my students. It makes me feel good to know that I have provided a young person with terrific options that otherwise would have been overlooked.

I hope that you will take time to be mindful of the 10 pillars of independent educational consulting. By doing so, I am confident that you, like me, will discover the joy of being an IEC. 🙌

This article includes material from my book, A Student of Colleges: Fundamentals of Independent Educational Consulting. Due to its length, this article was published in two parts. Part One appeared in the December 2020/January 2021 issue of Insights and included these Pillars: Student, Time, and Match.

Ethics, from page M7

Case 3. This year, I had the pleasure of working with a student who had some of the neatest (yep, I said neatest!) extracurricular activities (EC) and somehow found time to delve deeply into all of them. Humph, what an overachiever! Anyway, a member contacted the committee with a dilemma regarding the veracity of one of their student's extracurricular activities. On paper, this student was knocking it out of the park on extracurricular activities. When the IEC probed a little deeper after getting a feeling that something was off kilter, things started to unravel. To make matters murkier, the student received a nomination for a prestigious award based on their ECs, which would shine a spotlight on the student's résumé. The IEC reached out to the Ethics Committee and we recommended the IEC must have a difficult conversation with the student and the family or possibly step away from working with the family. A scheduled meeting, which the parents chose not to attend, further heightened the IEC's fear that the student's role was less than that indicated on paper.

The family chose to stand by their narrative, compelling the IEC to discontinue working with the family.

Gray area, maybe because the *Principles of Good Practice* and its companion piece, the *Standards of Excellence for IECA Member Consultants*, do not address this issue specifically; however, it is not gray in a moral sense.

During the summer, the Ethics Committee created a reporting system for concerns because we need an efficient method to track issues. To date, very few members have used that form, choosing to send emails or other forms of communication. Folks, we need your help. Please use the form at link.iecaonline.com/ethics-complaints. The committee thanks you.

We have started a conversation with the Business Practices Committee to look at those gray areas. Stay tuned. Here's to 2021 and meeting face to face! 🙌

Where Will We Meet with Clients in 2021?

By Bob Carlton, IECA (TX) and Terri Streetman, IECA (CA)

For the majority of independent educational consultants (IECs), the pandemic probably brought about a validation of what you already knew: the world is increasingly heading toward a digital interface. Early online adopters can feel a little smug as you glance at this article and quickly move on to the next. But for so many others, who found our strength and enjoyment in face-to-face meetings with our students, these last few months have been unsettling. Most of us will need to assess the value of what we have—going to a physical office, working over a desk, offering resources and snacks in person—with the reality that we may not return to that again.



Deb Davis Groves (TX), a college consultant and founder of Davis Groves Educational Services, LLC, shares a story that many dealt with earlier this year:

On March 8, 2020, COVID-19 required our immediate pivot from in person meetings to virtual only. My youngest daughter, who works for Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC, informed [my daughter] Aubrey and me that in person meetings were forbidden. We understood and never looked back.

Aubrey and I notified our clients. One insisted I was overreacting until colleges announced students couldn't return after spring break. We purchased the Zoom Pro Package, which provides for 100 participants, webinars, and recorded video storage. Initially nervous, all families, including us, loved this pivot. We became more efficient, expanded

our meeting availability, and offered webinars with follow-up recorded videos. Our ability to personally connect increased as students/parents were happier with this new virtual flexibility.

The greatest pivot was moving to virtual college application workshops. We went from having eight in person to 25 students virtually at a time, completing the workshops in five days compared to the previous three-and-a-half weeks. Our kids loved it and the best part: they could Zoom from vacations.

COVID-19 forced us to flex, pivot, recalibrate, and ZOOM. Game changers that kept our business forward thinking and moving!

There is a small, but growing number of IECs that have built their own offices and/or campus. Victoria Newman (CT), for example, is the founder and president at Greenwich Education Group, overseeing three schools, educational services, and consulting. She shares her story of how her business adapted to the demands of the pandemic:

In August 2020, Greenwich Education Group moved our schools and consulting services into an 80,000 square foot stand-alone building where we are the sole occupant. When we decided to take over the building it was purely to accommodate future growth; we couldn't have foreseen the need for social distancing, air quality control, and other mitigation strategies required in the current COVID-19 environment. Our management of the property has allowed us to control things like HEPA air filters, outside air intake, and use of outdoor spaces in a way that wouldn't have been possible in the previous spaces we had leased. This flexibility allowed us to offer full in person learning from the first day of our academic school year, at a time when many public and private schools in our area were fully remote or beginning their hybrid models. For our student population, many of whom struggle with learning challenges and school avoidance, the ability to be in person this year has been impactful for our students and staff.



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In an online survey conducted in early December 2020, more than 65 percent of independent educational consultants indicated they plan to stay virtual in 2021, with the rest anticipating a hybrid model of both online and in person. If you're in a situation where 2021 allows you to do your work safely both in person and online, the split may be based on your personal goals, the task, or your clients' preferences. Regardless of how you slice it, congratulations—you're now a hybrid counselor. Arun Ponnusamy (CA), chief academic officer at Collegewise, shares a few suggestions to help you maintain firm control of your time and talent:

- 1) **If you have close relationships with your clients, ask them what they want.** Some may be adamant about meeting in person, and others may remain wary of anything indoors. You may find your community's culture drives you to a specific approach.
- 2) **Draw a bright and non-negotiable line between your working from home (WFH) and working from office (WFO) days.** You'll go batty if you're always trying to manipulate your schedule to the "needs" of your families. If, after two or three months, you find reason to change it up, great. But give it a solid trial run first.

Evaluate the effectiveness of your work, depending on the medium. For example, essay brainstorming may be something you choose to do in person, but that third round of college research with a student you have a strong rapport with is fine via Zoom. Once you understand this, you can adjust your work appropriately.

- 3) **Evaluate the effectiveness of your work, depending on the medium.** For example, essay brainstorming may be something you choose to do in person, but that third round of college research with a student you have a strong rapport with is fine via Zoom. Once you understand this, you can adjust your work appropriately.
- 4) **Don't spread yourself too thin.** It's tempting to envision a world in which you'll grow your local base exponentially while simultaneously building a global online empire. It's not impossible, but it's unlikely. Especially in 2021, consider picking a lane and sticking to it for sanity if nothing else.
- 5) **Clearly communicate all this with your families—early and often.** You're a professional and having boundaries is part of that. Just make sure your families know what they are, so they're not surprised or caught off guard. If you don't, you'll be caught in the doom loop of trying to please them after the fact, and we all know that never goes well.

Remember, the impact of a physical space is not simply meeting with students. For many IECs, that space has been central to their marketing efforts. Betsy Morgan (CT), a college consultant and founder of College Matters, LLC, shares her experience:

A common first response of prospective clients when entering our office was, "What a fantastic space." Our office is light


and open. It has a waiting area filled with teen-friendly snacks and a map of client acceptances. A teen-favorite pizza place is right downstairs and ice cream is right around the corner. Our office is "us"—warm, welcoming, and fun. Our office is part of our brand.

Naturally, attempting to capture that same energy in a Zoom informational meeting has been a challenge. So, I've started to conduct those meetings not from my home office, but downtown. And, anecdotally, my conversion rates have gone up.

Marketing is the main reason why we've decided to hold on to our space until we can return to in person, even with the knowledge that many students may prefer to continue working remotely post-pandemic. Seeing our sign downtown lets prospective families know that "We're still here and doing just fine."

Making this important strategic decision can be difficult. Josephine Firat, CEO at Firat Education and a regional director at Scale Smarter Partners, suggests IECs focus on these five factors:

- 1) **Customers:** What do your customers want? How do they prefer to access your offering? Have the customers' needs changed? Have their fears or priorities evolved?
- 2) **Operations:** How are you going to continue to deliver the service you promised? What will your processes look like in a virtual setting? In person? Or a hybrid of both? What technology or physical resources will you need to best deliver on your promise in the most efficient, effective, and competitive way?
- 3) **People (Employees):** How does your decision affect your team? How will your decision affect your pool of potential employees now and in the future? If you change how you currently operate, what kind of training and tools will you need to provide to your team so they can do their job in the best way?
- 4) **Financial implications:** Plan out a two- to three-year budget scenario for each option. Think about every little detail that might add up in the end.
- 5) **Permanence:** Is this strategic change you are about to make something that will be temporary (one to two years) or a permanent change to your business? When you answer that, you can determine the resources you choose to allocate for implementation.

The pandemic's impact on college and school admissions has made independent educational consulting services more important than ever. And while the pandemic may have brought an initial feeling of uncertainty and fear for our independent educational consulting businesses, IECs are finding strategic and creative ways to serve students. Our ability and willingness to find new ways to meet families in 2021 ensures that we can continue making a difference in the lives of students everywhere. 

Financial Aid Tips for IECs

By C. Claire Law, MS, CEP, IECA (SC)

We're lucky that as independent educational consultants (IECs), we don't need to know as much as financial aid administrators do! I always shudder when I hear COD and other acronyms. COD in financial aid means Common Origination and Disbursement. At the 2018 Federal Student Aid Conference, I attended a session for international schools qualified to receive US federal financial aid. A college in France disbursed a few extra dollars to a US student studying abroad. The college was obligated to return the exact amount of \$2.54 to the US Department of Education and spent countless hours trying to give it back in US dollars. The French financial aid administrators practically begged the Department of Education representative to let them send a few Euros out of their pockets to settle the account! The compliance regulations can be onerous, and I'm glad I don't have to deal with them!

Some of these regulations will change in 2021 because federal financial aid is due for a process called reauthorization. All federal financial aid is legislated under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. The formulas behind the form we know as FAFSA and the corollary compliance regulations are supposed to be reviewed and amended as needed every few years. The last time FAFSA was reviewed and reauthorized was in 2008. According to NASFAA, the National Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators, "This 12-year gap is the longest in history."

link.iecaonline.com/HEA

As IECs, we "just" need to know what is useful to our families. Yet, what we "just need to know" turns out to be a

lot! Most families need financial support to attend colleges, especially the expensive ones, and applying for aid is a personal matter that can be complicated. As IECs, we need to be sensitive to our families' financial situations. At the beginning of the process, the financial piece is not the driving force. Finding the right college that can enhance the student's natural gifts and talents is more important. After IECs clarify the family's expectations and dispel the myths, the task of helping families understand how much financial support they will receive is much more complicated. Most colleges require only the FAFSA form. About 400 other colleges require the CSS Profile, which includes examining the family's home equity, savings, retirement assets, custodial and non-custodial parent assets, and the value of business and farm equity.

Parents have asked me if their ability to pay will affect whether their kid will get accepted. It's a loaded question for an IEC. If the family's need is large, a need-aware or need-sensitive college may defer the student, or "admit-deny." This means the student is admissible, but the college doesn't have enough funds to meet the student's full demonstrated need. This results in financial aid awards that have big gaps. For example, a family's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) may be \$10,000 but they have to pay \$29,000 for their student to attend. The college may be "need-blind" but it doesn't mean much if can't provide the funds to fill the gap, which in this case, would be \$19,000. The college may meet this need by offering the PLUS loan. If the family doesn't have the amount of



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Financial Aid, from page M11

their EFC, in this case, \$10,000, they can borrow this amount as well through the PLUS loan. When as IECs we see awards with such big gaps, it's an "admit-deny" message, and we need to lead the family to financially safer schools.


When students receive financial aid awards, IECs can be instrumental in helping the family decipher them. I have found that there's a lot of discretion about how schools design and create award letters. One prominent financial aid administrator told me that their award letter was part of the college's communication and marketing flow and style. I gathered then that there's some gamesmanship associated with the design of the award letters. As IECs, we need to know that they are confusing to our families.

The College Sub-committee on Affordability is aware of some financial aid awards that leave a lot to be desired. Some colleges include the parent PLUS loan on the award letter and show the net cost as "zero." Such letters can be deceiving to the uninitiated consumer. The federal Department of Education created a form, called the "College Financing Plan," for colleges to use when awarding aid to make it easier for students to compare apples with apples. You can help your clients by making them aware of this federal financial form: link.iecaonline.com/college-financing-plan

You will see that this form has a space for the Expected Family Contribution, under both the federal and institutional methodology. Most colleges do not list the family's EFC on the financial aid award, so families can't figure out the reasonable amount they were supposed to provide out of their resources. They can't tell if they're being gapped and by how much. IECs can guide their families to enter their awards into the form above to compare gaps and net costs better.

If you're interested in finding out more about award letters, see "Cost in Translation: How Financial Aid Award Letters Fall Short," a December 2017 study conducted by the Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) that examined nearly 200 award letters. The report explains in plain and simple language where award letters fall short: link.iecaonline.com/cost-in-translation.

When we come across Pell-eligible students with good grades, let's remember that a small percentage of US colleges have the funds and well-established policies to meet full demonstrated need. The net cost for those students can be similar to their in-state public university. You can view the list of colleges that meet full need at myintuition.org/schools and your clients can figure out what would be their net costs.

I feel that IECA members are ideally suited to learn financial aid in a way that would benefit their families. They know colleges. They get to know students and their parents well. IECs can tell whether a student would rank at the top, middle, or bottom of a college's applicant pool. Admission and financial aid are tightly linked. Students at the top of the applicant pool get larger scholarships. While financial planners work with parents' financial investments, such as 529 plans and tax deductions, IECs help families pay less for college by orienting them to where students are well suited. If you're interested in learning more about financial aid, please refer to my book, *Control Your College Costs*. 

References:

Colleges that meet 100 percent of demonstrated need: myintuition.org/schools

Department of Education Shopping Sheet, now called "College Financing Plan": link.iecaonline.com/college-financing-plan

National Association Student Financial Aid Administrators, "What's Next for the Higher Education Act After Another Year Passes Without a Reauthorization?": link.iecaonline.com/HEA

Sandy Baum, PhD, "A Primer on Economics for Financial Aid Professionals": eric.ed.gov/?id=ED409795

The Institute of College Access and Success (TICAS), "Cost in Translation: How Financial Aid Award Letters Fall Short": link.iecaonline.com/cost-in-translation

50 Most Affordable Colleges that Meet Significant Financial Need: greatvaluecolleges.net/affordable/affordable-most-financial-aid

Now on the Member Network: IECA's Upcoming Events



All of IECA's upcoming events can now be viewed on the home page of the Member Network: network.iecaonline.com

Click on *Events > Upcoming Events* in the red navigation bar to see the full calendar listing. To submit an event to be added to the calendar, complete the form at: link.iecaonline.com/upcoming-events

Bookmark the home page of the Member Network, network.iecaonline.com, for easy access to the upcoming events listing, discussion topics and attachments (found in the libraries), the Member Directory, and more. To bookmark the page, go to your browser menu and look for *Bookmarks > Bookmark This Tab* (Google Chrome) or *Bookmarks > Add Bookmark* (Safari).



What's Your Solution?

Virtual College Visit Ideas for Today's Applicants



In a recent post on the Member Network, **Sherri Maxman** (NY) sought ideas to add to her "College Visit Checklist" to reflect the new reality of virtual visits. Pre-pandemic, Maxman encouraged students to eat in a college cafeteria, peruse bulletin boards, and pick up the college's student newspaper. Now she is suggesting they take a virtual tour, connect with a current student, and explore the college's website in depth to learn about academics, student life, clubs/organizations, athletics, and other facets of life at the college. Many IECs shared additional ideas.

- I have had students ask if there are any virtual classroom visit options. Only a few have been successful with that option, but it is a great way to see a class in action if allowed. I have also had families who simply go drive/walk the area near campus to get a feel for the neighborhood.
- I had a student use Google Maps and look for cafes/restaurants around the campus. She would then go to their website and check out events and see if they had any info about the area and the school. This may not work for all schools but searching for places where students meet outside campus can help get an idea of the student life.
- I've been recommending my students look on YouTube for student videos from different colleges. Often, they can find great quality "day in the life of a [insert college name here] student" type of videos.
- I direct my students to CampusReel for videos and to Unigo, a blog by current students and recent graduates.
- I am asking students to seek out info sessions put on by the specific college within a larger university system to find out more specifics about admission requirements and opportunities for certain programs (i.e. School of Engineering, Education, or Nursing). Not all universities offer these, but I find they are more helpful than the general overview info sessions. I provide links to these in CollegePlannerPro for students to help them quickly access this tool.



- Have students follow colleges on social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
- I have them do a virtual interview if the college offers it.
- College Scoops has ebooks available for purchase as well as student ambassadors at many colleges that have created videos about their college and college application experience.
- I suggest that students speak with a recent graduate, ask the college to send info about work/grad school placement following graduation, and do deeper research about the town/surrounding area.
- I encourage students to visit the web pages of the specific college or department within the university they are interested in to learn about current students, professors, and departmental projects. I also have students look at four-year course plans for majors they are interested in.
- I suggest they follow some of the college's social media channels, especially if they get deeper than the general university level (department, teams, clubs, etc.) and find YouTube channels related to the college, especially for clubs and other organizations.
- I'm suggesting to the student to make it a family affair. Load the virtual tour on their laptop and then project it to their family room TV. I have also encouraged the student

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Committee Reports

College Committee

Chair: Laurie Kopp Weingarten (NJ)

Vice Chair: Carole Kraemer (NJ)

Ex officio: Joanne LaSpina (PA)

Recent Activities and Accomplishments:

1. Marilyn O'Toole and Joanne LaSpina have continued our College Conversations with: UCLA, University of Southern California, Gonzaga, UVA, George Washington University, Johns Hopkins, College of William & Mary, University of Maryland, and the University of Denver. More to come in 2021!
2. Laurie Kopp Weingarten asked for certificates to be awarded to outgoing members of our committee, and that is being implemented soon.
3. Bibi Malek has submitted relevant articles for *Insights* on topics including student internships, Canadian universities, and going to school in the United Kingdom.
4. The College Committee had two breakout sessions, led by Laurie Kopp Weingarten, Joanne LaSpina, and Carole Kraemer, at the virtual 2020 IECA Fall Conference that were well-received. We are looking to submit a "part two" of those sessions for the virtual 2021 Spring Conference.
5. Our committee planned three roundtable topics for the virtual 2020 IECA Fall Conference that received terrific feedback.

Current/Ongoing Initiatives

- **College Relations:** Improve relations with college admissions professionals, including those from selective colleges. The momentum has been strong, and we're looking to build on that.
- **College Conversations:** Continue our monthly informative webinar conversations with medium/large public and private colleges.

- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Marcy Beatty is looking into promoting volunteer opportunities to our members aimed at reaching low-income and first-generation students.

- **College Resources:** Eva Garza-Nyer is working to ensure that resources on the IECA website meet the needs of members.

- **IECA Awareness:** We would like to increase the awareness of IECA among the general public. Families should recognize the name as a symbol of trust, reliability, and knowledge.

- **Insights:** Continue to publish relevant articles in this IECA publication to meet the needs of our members.

- **Affordability Sub-Committee:** Work collaboratively with this committee to create actionable goals that align with the overall strategic missions of IECA.

- **IECA Impact:** Many IECA members donate their time and expertise to under-served students and families. This should be quantified and publicly celebrated.

Future Plans and Goals:

- Resume tours as soon as safely possible. The canceled spring 2020 Big 10+ Tour would be a priority along with a possible Mid-Atlantic Flagship Tour and a repeat of the highly popular WOW (Western Oregon and Washington) Tour.
- Once life returns to normal, we'd like to consider offering a virtual regional group for those IECs who don't have a live regional group. Vita Cohen has offered to be the moderator.

Global Committee

Chair: Sarah Loring de Garcia (Mexico)

Vice Chair: Julia Gooding (China)

The IECA Global Committee has been working on a number of new initiatives

this year, supporting IECA members as we work with students crossing international borders for education. Julia Gooding, Steve Li, Jean Louis, Teo Salgado, and Tripti Singh have been focused on communications goals. In addition to coordinating articles for *Insights*, they've started a monthly "Global Gathering" space for members to connect on Zoom to discuss concerns and share ideas, and they've also hosted numerous "Global College Conversations" with universities around the world, delivering virtual visits to keep us all up-to-date even in a pandemic.

Marina Lee, David Korb, and Kara Madden have been busy working on cultural competency tools and access/equity goals, which will roll out over the course of the spring. Additionally, they're busy making big plans for a project focused on character in schools and looking ahead to May (Mental Health Month) with ideas to better support our students and each other. Sarah Loring de Garcia, Sandy Furth, David Hawkins, and Patricia O'Keefe are revisiting the "I" (international) specialty designation and making a proposal to update the qualifications. We're also updating the Peer-to-Peer resources and creating tools to help IECs who are wading into new territories to make referrals or find mentors for professional growth.

Eventually, when the pandemic ends, we hope to explore collaborations with International ACAC's regional institute events to promote ethical practice and encourage more independent counselors from around the globe to join IECA.

Therapeutic Committee

Chair: Lisa Vella (NY)

Vice Chair: Jesse Quam (NC)

Written by the Therapeutic Committee

Being a group of IECs whose very raison d'être is dealing with crisis, it seems only natural that the IECA Therapeutic Committee has been taking

on the pandemic head-on. Now that we are in month 10 (or is that year 10?) of the pandemic, it seems a good time to pause and look back over what we have been able to accomplish during these crazy times. In April, under the leadership of then-Chair Gail Curran, the Therapeutic Committee began our Monday support calls. During these Zoom calls, members have been able to share stories, process cases, ask for advice, and connect as both professionals and as humans doing their best to carry on during a pandemic. What started as a way for IECs to connect and learn about Zoom (remember when we didn't know how to Zoom?) quickly became a staple in many of our weekly calendars.

Our calls, tours, and conferences have brought us together as a committee and as IECA members. In many ways we have actually been more connected this year, and we have leaned heavily upon each other as we continue to navigate the tricky waters of working with families whose struggles are exacerbated by the pandemic and all it brings with it.

As the pandemic continued to stymie our ability to travel, the committee began hosting twice-weekly Zoom tours of programs and schools. In addition to overall programmatic information, the tours focus on how the programs are dealing with COVID-19, including outbreak protocols, quarantine procedures, and new family supports. Committee Chair Lisa Vella has spent hours each week coordinating these tours, which to date have numbered over 60. Thanks to Ruby Laufer, they have expanded to include traditional boarding schools who work with therapeutic clients and more off-

the-beaten path programs which may not normally have an engaged audience of 10-30 IECs. The ownership of the committee members and the participation on the calls has been lovely to witness, and we are looking forward to continuing this very successful program.

For the two 2020 IECA Conferences, the Therapeutic Committee took on the task of how to create content for a virtual conference, which for many of us is rooted in connection and personal interaction. Working in close conjunction with the amazing IECA staff and leadership, the committee was able to offer pre-conference sessions on "What Keeps us Up at Night" and

"Continuum of Care," and a variety of roundtable sessions where we could develop strategies and learn from each other. Additionally, we were able to introduce a "virtual lobby" at the Fall Conference where we could all gather and just connect. While it's not the same as all being together, we are proud of the sessions and connection opportunities the committee played a role in at both of the 2020 conferences.

As we look ahead to 2021, we are excited for our sessions at the Professional Development Retreat,

the two exciting IECA Conferences, the continuation of our Zoom tours, the Monday support calls, and the continued motivation from members who are not a part of the committee to take on leadership roles. We're also looking forward to the wonderful prospect of COVID-19 immunizations!

On a recent call, we as a committee discussed our areas of growth in a challenging year. Some shared that they have been able to get outside more, spend more time with family, and read more. Others shared that they were thankful to have the privilege of meaningful work. In short, we all realized how blessed we are to have each other as colleagues, supporters, and, most importantly, as friends.

Our calls, tours, and conferences have brought us together as a committee and as IECA members. In many ways, we have actually been more connected this year, and we have leaned heavily upon each other as we continue to navigate the tricky waters of working with families whose struggles are exacerbated by the pandemic and all it brings with it. Always finding the silver lining, as a committee we strive to take this spirit of connection, support, and togetherness with us in the next years.

Moving forward, we look forward to sharing with IECA members what we as therapeutic consultants do in our profession as we learn more about the college consultants' acumen. Our earnest hope is that we grow together in the association with even more cross-training, connection, and collegiality. 🙌

Virtual College Visits, from page M13

- to have a journal dedicated to virtual tours and once a week watch the tour with mom and dad, making note of the college's flagship programs, physical environment, traditions, activities, and size/location.
- I try and have the students reach out to an alum if there is one in their "neighborhood" or state, or if there is an alumni association where they are living abroad.
- I recommend students with particular interests to contact specific departments and request sitting in on a class.

- I recommend to my students to go to YouTube and type in the college name and whatever: dorm life, engineering, sports, theatre, student life, professors, etc. It seems helpful and a great way to get information about the students' specific interests.

Note: Susan Groden (FL) posted a related "Student Guidelines for College Admissions Virtual and Webinars," which is available on the Member Network in the College Community. 🙌

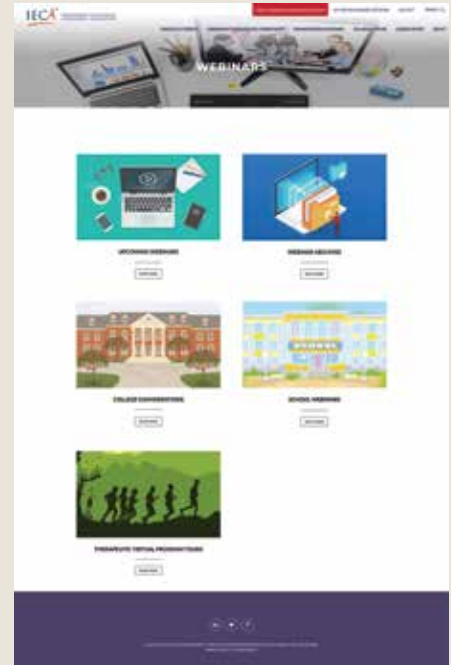
Resource Spotlight

On the IECA Website: Upcoming & Archived Webinars

There is a wealth of information on the IECA website, including archived webinars exclusively available to IECA members. Take advantage of these opportunities to learn about the latest issues and trends impacting the work of IECs and to attend virtual tours of colleges, therapeutic programs, and schools.

On the Webinars home page (webinars.iecaonline.com), you can find our schedule of upcoming **webinars** and view recordings of past programs organized by topic. You can also register for **College Conversations**, virtual tours with admission representatives from colleges and universities across the country and internationally, and view recorded sessions. On **School Webinars**, see upcoming and recorded sessions organized by IECA's Schools Committee. And on **Therapeutic Virtual Program Tours**, view virtual tours of therapeutic schools and programs made possible by IECA's Therapeutic Committee.

Bookmark webinars.iecaonline.com so these resources are right at your fingertips! To bookmark the page, go to your browser menu and look for *Bookmarks > Bookmark This Tab* (Google Chrome) or *Bookmarks > Add Bookmark* (Safari).



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