



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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IECA⁺ INSIGHTS

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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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Steven Mercer, Mercer Educational Consulting, LLC, can be reached at info@mercered.com

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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Government Relations, from page 5

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.

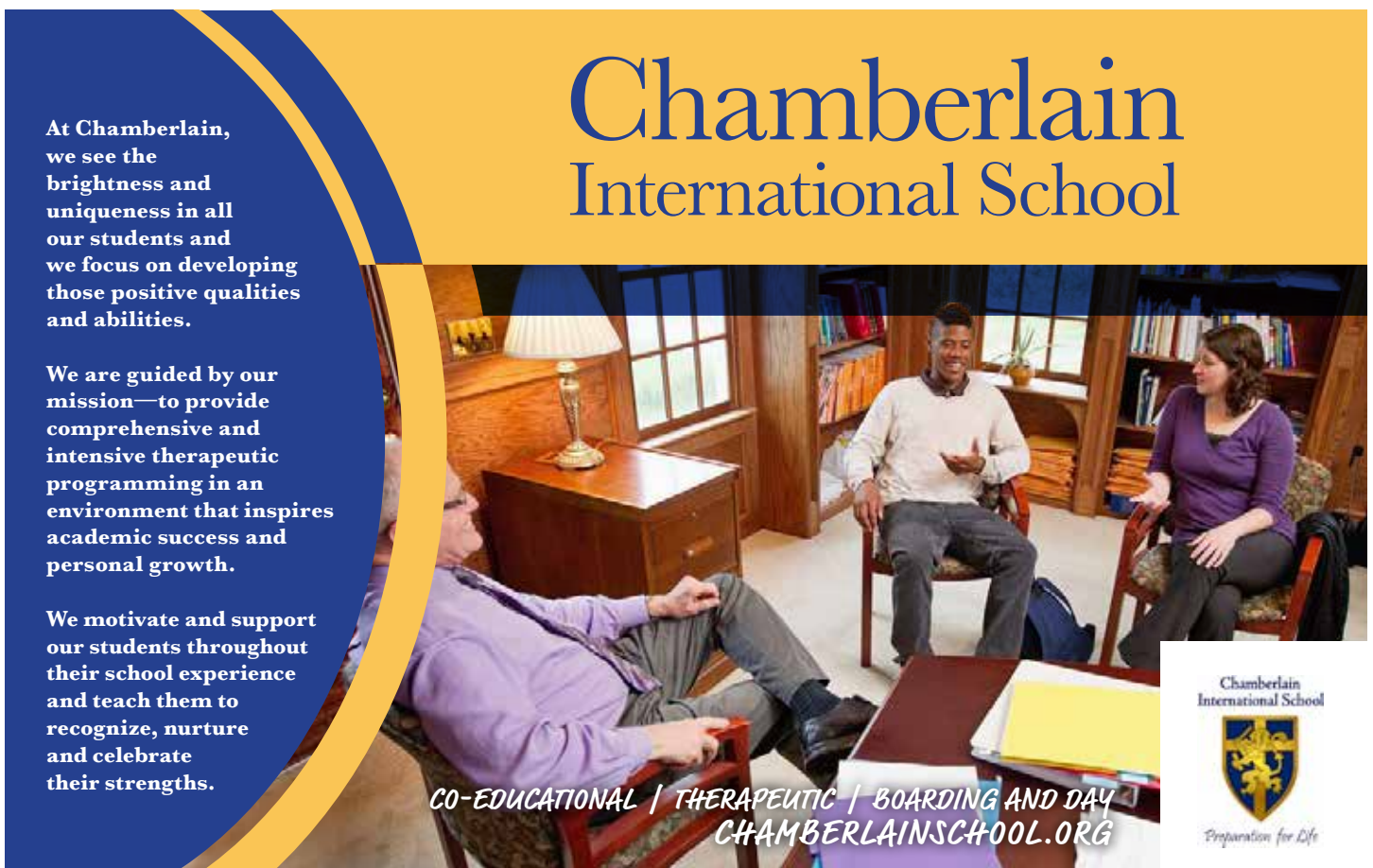
The Government Relations Committee is now creating the building blocks for an effective long-term legislative affairs program.

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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Three Tips, from page 13

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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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




Huong Nguyen, Professional Academic Counseling, can be reached at consultant@pacgroup.org

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
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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 Ronisans 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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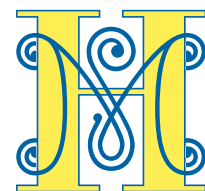
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