

IECA⁺ INSIGHTS

THE JOURNAL OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

Spring 2023

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Advocacy Day



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Proposal deadline: July 1, 2023

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- Focus on timely and relevant topics
- Stimulate discussion and audience engagement

Suggested session topics:

- School, college, program admission trends
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- Business and marketing strategies for independent educational consulting
- Meeting the needs of a diverse student population
- New approaches for admission reps and IECs to collaborate
- Trends in financial aid

For more information: link.IECAonline.com/present

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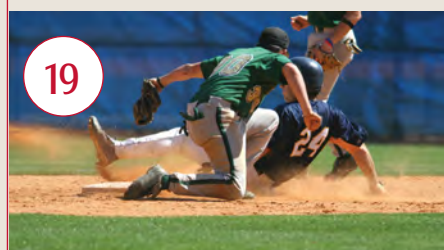
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IECA's Professional Excellence



Ibrahim Firat

Do you remember when or why you joined IECA? I sure do. I attended my first IECA conference as a non-member in spring 2008, just after I launched my IEC practice, because I had heard that IECA is “where you have to be if you want to learn and grow.” Having launched multiple businesses in my 20s, my experience was limited to entrepreneurship and teaching in higher education. The intersection between entrepreneurship and education was the driving motivation for me to become an IEC, but “how” to make it in the industry remained a mystery—as it often does for an entrepreneur who pursues the opportunity now and figures it out later. **IECA became the answer to the “how,”** and the help to “figure it all out.”

At that spring 2008 conference, I witnessed **professionalism, collaboration, networking, continuing education,** and **a sense of community** all in one event. I was blown away. From case study

analysis of student admissions files to networking events, how to guide students to write the most impactful admissions essays to how to identify and assess a student's fit to a certain institution, I went home with takeaways I'd thought I could only get while pursuing another post-graduate degree—all in three days, at the cost of a conference registration. The cost vs. value analysis seemed unreal, but there it was. IECA was indeed the definition of **Professional Excellence** in this industry.

In the 15-year period between 2008 and 2023, IECA membership has grown 600 percent despite the elevated standards and guidelines required to be approved for membership. The main driver for this growth: IECA single-handedly leads the industry in the support of **qualified** and **ethical** IECs worldwide.

It is not just about the membership numbers, however. It is also about **quality**

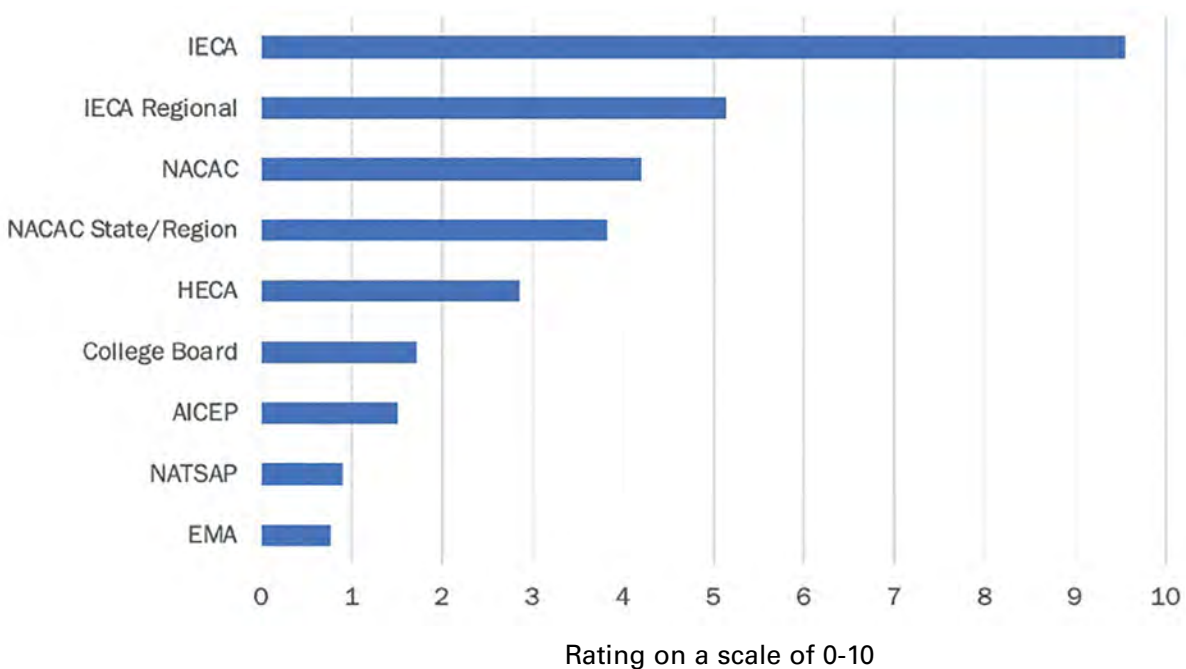
and **continued** value delivery. Our 2022 State of the Profession Survey provides additional evidence and reasons as to why IECA continues to hold its reputation. Among 1,000 IEC participants in the survey, IECA remains the most important organization, and the opportunities to grow professionally as well as IECA's credibility and reputation are the most cited reasons for joining.

How do we continue to deliver our value proposition in a dynamic environment to our ever-growing membership while still leading the industry in **Professional Excellence**?

1. **Foundational Principles:** Any association or organization that

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Organizations Important to IECs 2022



Source: 2022 survey of 1,000 IECA members

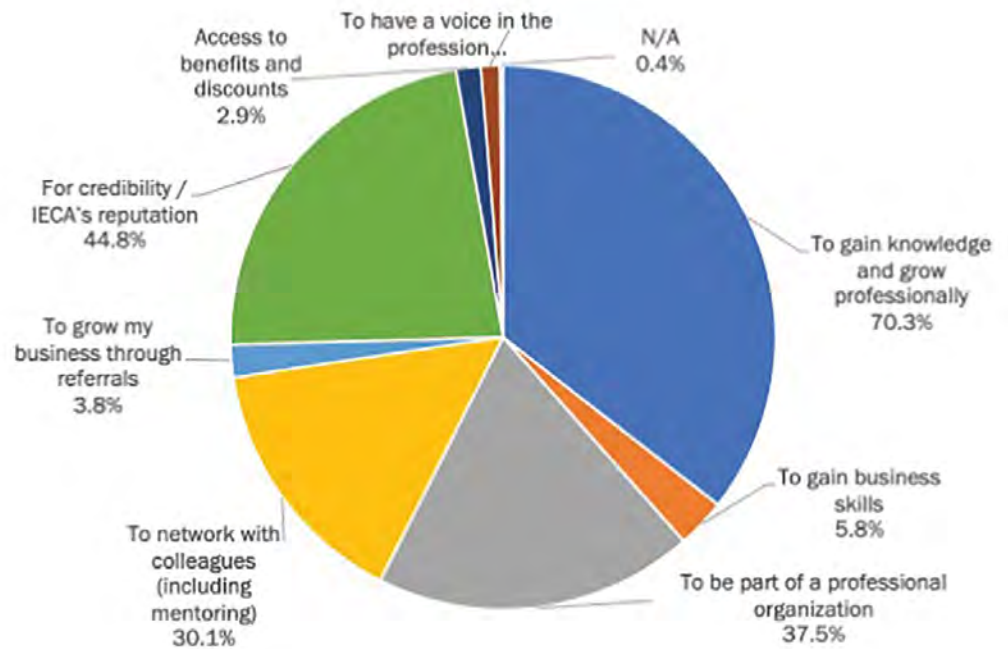
Calendar

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

MAY	02 Bay Area Regional Group (BARGE) Meeting	03 Wellness Wednesday Drop-in Zoom Rural/Small Town Affinity Group Meeting MBA Roundtable	05 Gateway to Graduate School Consulting	08 IECA Spring Conference	09 IECA Spring Conference
	10 IECA Spring Conference	12 Consultants with Young Children Affinity Group Meeting Business Practices Roundtable	16 Schools Committee Open House	17 European Regional Group Meeting Wellness Wednesday Drop-in Zoom Medical School Roundtable Homeschooling Affinity Group Meeting	18 College Conversations In Focus: Global LGBTQIA+ & Allies Roundtable LGBTQIA+ Community Members Only Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting
	19 Professional Members Roundtable	22 OH/MI/Western PA Regional Group Roundtable	24 Wellness Wednesday Drop-in Zoom Rethinking College: Postsecondary Ed for Students with ID	26 Associate & Student Members Roundtable	31 Global Gathering Open Forum Wellness Wednesday Drop-in Zoom Law School Roundtable
JUNE	02 Gateway to Graduate School Consulting	05 College Conversations: Fordham University	06 Bay Area Regional Group (BARGE) Meeting	07 MBA Roundtable	08 New Member Welcome Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting
	09 Consultants with Young Children Affinity Group Meeting Business Practices Roundtable	14 Allied Health Roundtable	15 LGBTQIA+ & Allies Roundtable LGBTQIA+ Community Members Only	16 Professional Members Roundtable	20 Schools Committee Open House
	21 European Regional Group Meeting Medical School Roundtable Homeschooling Affinity Group Meeting	23 Associate & Student Members Roundtable	28 Global Gathering Open Forum		
JULY	12 Law School Roundtable	13 Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting	14 Consultants with Young Children Affinity Group Meeting	19 Homeschooling Affinity Group Meeting	21 Professional Members Roundtable
	24 IECA Summer Training Institute	25 IECA Summer Training Institute	26 IECA Summer Training Institute	27 IECA Summer Training Institute	28 IECA Summer Training Institute

departs from its foundational principles and/or values is doomed to failure. The main reason IECA has continuously been the gold standard in the industry for nearly 50 years, even with its growth, is because it lives and breathes its mission to this day since 1976: To promote the highest quality independent educational consulting to students and families seeking skilled, ethical, academic, or therapeutic guidance; to enhance professional development; and to foster career satisfaction among members. Our promise is to stick with our foundational principles no matter how big we become.

Reasons for Joining IECA



Source: 2022 survey of 1,000 IECA members

2. Environmental Scanning:

Thanks to our adept leadership and team of professionals continuously monitoring the industry, IECA has delivered educational programming and membership services to IECs that are timely and accurate, so that you can implement changes in your practices to serve your students and families more effectively. We are implementing more tracking, more scanning, and more data-sorting and analysis of environmental changes in our industry so that you continue to stay ahead of the game (i.e. Professional Excellence).

3. **Intentional Pivoting:** Prior to 2020, the word “pivot” didn’t have as much impact in our daily personal or professional lives, but here we are talking about associations, organizations, businesses, or even people who experience difficulties or successes based on how they were able to “pivot” (or not). Given the effective environmental scanning IECA has executed in the past, intentional pivoting has been a mere “regular” day-to-day operation. For instance, when we noticed impending legislation in certain states that would limit our member businesses’ operations, IECA formed a Government Relations Committee and immediately began engaging in activities that would protect IECs and elevate our status among the public and government. [See page 13 for a review of our most recent legislative efforts during Advocacy Day.] Nearly 10 percent membership growth year after year since the introduction of that first legislation, as well as the rise of COVID, is proof of why IECA continues to be the Professional Excellence standard of the industry.

4. **Leading:** We know IECA has established itself as the leading association in Professional Excellence when the Senate Subcommittee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) contacted IECA to provide expertise on the emotional and mental well-being of adolescents and young adults, or

when national (even international) newscasts get in line to interview IECA members and leadership when Varsity Blues broke out. But that’s not enough to make an impact. Each and every one of you, as an IECA member, is charged with leading the communities to which you belong or intend to belong. IECA has your back with the resources you need! This is the time for you to submit proposals to and present at your regional ACACs, NACAC, or other professional organizations; publish in scientific or educational journals; research, teach, and lead educational programming in various educational institutions; or reach out to your elected officials to protect and elevate your IEC status. Contact the IECA office for any support or resources you need, because chances are that another member or the association itself has conducted a similar event or proposal in the past, and we can support you.

As we are in the early stages of our Strategic Plan 2022–2025, Professional Excellence as a strategic driver tends to intertwine multiple drivers: Education, Advocacy, and Membership. In the next two years, we will take Professional Excellence and standards to the next level. In addition to leading initiatives outside of IECA, please help us by providing feedback on and participating in the new or reimagined educational programming in 2024 and beyond so that we can all **ELEVATE** your membership, your value, and those of IECA and the profession. Think about the first time you joined IECA and why. Whether that was two years ago or 20, IECA’s Professional Excellence status elevates your status and your value.

Ibrahim Firat, MBA
IECA President



AI Tools: Friend or Foe?

By Cathy Costa, MBA, IECA (MA)

As we enter college essay season, the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT raises new questions about the best practices for generating admission materials:

- Will our clients use these tools, with or without telling us, to develop essays or short answers?
- Will we (and admissions officers) know if they do? Should we (and will they) care?
- How can we harness the power of these tools to improve our practices?

Personal Statements

Before addressing the first question, let's reflect on what makes a college essay effective. Just for fun, I posed this question to ChatGPT since I believe it's important to get to know, rather than fear or think theoretically about, these tools. See Image A on page 9 for its response.

Reading this response confirmed my suspicion that ChatGPT does not possess an adequate recipe for developing what we, as experienced professionals, consider to be strong college

essays. Artificial Intelligence tools only know what they have learned from past data and are not capable of original thought or insight. While we may agree or disagree with some points in ChatGPT's list, the second point shows that **these tools cannot be used to write effective essays unless our clients do the critical thinking required to define their unique experiences and perspectives.**

To measure its capacity to capture any individual's story, I put one of the Common Application essay prompts into ChatGPT. View Image B on page 10 for its response.

This response demonstrates that the current version of ChatGPT generates generic responses and cannot scour the web and capture what is unique or interesting about a particular individual. Thus, to support students in developing strong personal statements, we will still need to help them use various brainstorming methods and exercises to reflect and identify what they want to convey uniquely to colleges through their essays.



Cathy Costa, Costa Educational Consulting, can be reached at cathy@costaeducationalconsulting.com.

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Response to 'What makes a college essay effective?'



An effective college essay should have the following attributes:

1. **Clarity:** The essay should be easy to read and understand, with clear and concise language.
2. **Personal voice:** The essay should reveal the writer's personality and perspective, making it unique and memorable.
3. **Relevance:** The essay should respond directly to the prompt, addressing the given topic in a meaningful and insightful way.
4. **Focus:** The essay should stay focused on a single, central idea, and avoid going off on tangents.
5. **Specificity:** The essay should use concrete examples, anecdotes, and details to support the writer's points and bring the topic to life.
6. **Structure:** The essay should have a well-organized structure, with an introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion that flow logically and build toward a clear, overarching point.
7. **Correctness:** The essay should be free of grammatical and spelling errors, and written in proper academic style.

By combining these attributes, an effective college essay can showcase the writer's abilities, interests, and personality, and help them stand out from the crowd.

- Tools such as questionnaires, values and soundbite exercises, and brainstorming activities are designed to draw out our students' unique strengths and how they envision contributing to a college community. **This is where the critical thinking about a college essay resides, and it cannot be replaced by AI.**
- A short writing exercise helps us see how a student writes on a simple topic, and to hear their "voice." Are they naturally funny, self-deprecating, insightful, great storytellers, unacquainted with punctuation, or focused on tiny details? These exercises help **identify what is unique about a student's voice and encourage them to honor and harness that to their advantage.** Sounding like everyone else is not a positive when it comes to college essay writing, and we can help students appreciate this.
- Discussing how students have unique writing styles and voices may discourage them from using AI tools to craft personal statements, but let's be honest, **they will probably try using them.** My experimentation has convinced me that this will yield generic results that students will likely discard or need to treat as an initial draft to refine and make their own. This will become the equivalent of basing one's initial draft off a sample from a book or online; it is a risk that is not new to us, and **we should simply continue to encourage students to personalize the generic and make it unique.**
- **Once any AI-generated essays are customized to reflect a student's story, strengths, and potential contribution, they will no longer be identifiable by AI-detection software because they will have changed so substantially.** Since we do not yet know how admission officers will view AI-generated content, and what (if any) detection methods they may employ, we need to emphasize

that it is in our students' best interest to put in the work and personalize any ideas that they might generate using AI (or other research) tools. If we articulate the benefits and hold students accountable for crafting truly personal statements, we need not fear their use of AI tools and may even come to embrace them for certain purposes.

Supplemental Essays

"Why College X?" and other supplemental essays require research, and we might assume that AI tools could be helpful in generating material for first drafts. To test this, I asked ChatGPT to generate a Northwestern essay based on my prior client's experience. See the result on page 11.

It generated a formulaic and robotic-sounding essay that did yield quite a few ideas warranting further research. However, I plan to warn my students that they must verify any facts generated by these tools and that admission officers who read many applications daily will come to recognize the essays that AI tools are producing. So again, it is in their best interest to customize

any information generated using Google searches, AI chatbots, and other research tools. And despite experimenting by feeding ChatGPT increasingly specific and leading facts about this student, no amount of prompting helped ChatGPT generate an essay with insight and connection between the student and Northwestern's opportunities.

There is no comparison with the real student's essay, which opened with "Driving the streets of Gurgaon was a maze with no rules," followed by her description that in the US, "I was shocked by how organized driving is. Even among the notorious Boston drivers, the lane lines, traffic signals, and sidewalks felt like a utopia." She described how these experiences sparked her interest in civil engineering, how her diverse high school experiences made her well-suited for Northwestern's multi-disciplinary approach to learning, that she planned to double major in civil engineering and computer science and minor in manufacturing and design engineering, valued the school's Engineering First Philosophy to solve real-world problems, and would participate in its Center for Engineering Sustainability and Resilience's research to gain practical experience in a field she cares deeply about, improving the infrastructure in global communities. This is the quality of thinking that resulted in this student being admitted, and ChatGPT does not generate anything close.

Knowing they may still experiment with these tools, I plan to help students understand some important caveats:

- Funny (and some creepy) media reports have shown how **many publicly tested AI tools, including ChatGPT and Bing, have**

continued on page 10

demonstrated a concerning tendency to “hallucinate.” Bing stated its love for a New York Times reporter and insisted he was in an unhappy marriage. Bing’s FAQs state that it “aims to base all its responses on reliable sources—but AI can make mistakes, and third-party content on the internet may not always be accurate or reliable. Bing will sometimes misrepresent the information it finds, and you may see responses that sound convincing but are incomplete, inaccurate, or inappropriate. Use your own judgment and double-check the facts before making decisions or taking action based on Bing’s responses.”

• **The way a student asks a question can lead to misleading answers and incorrect interpretations.**

When asked for a list of top colleges for sports marketing, ChatGPT included the University of Notre Dame. Knowing it does not offer an undergraduate program in sports management or marketing, I did some research to learn that Notre Dame offers a master of science in business analytics with a sports analytics concentration. Obviously, referencing this incorrectly as an undergraduate option in an essay would not benefit a student’s application.

- ChatGPT was “trained” using data up until September 2021. Therefore, any new developments since will not be reflected in its answers. Colleges are constantly changing their offerings and requirements, and students need to be accurate to be credible in their essays, so they need to **be aware of the limitations of any AI tools that they use.**

These caveats demonstrate that while students may use AI tools to generate ideas for supplemental essays, they will need to carefully fact-check the information generated; thus, they will be forced to do the research we encourage them to do anyway. In addition, students will still need to create their own reflections on how their prior experiences link to college offerings and how they would take advantage of opportunities and contribute to a campus community.

How can AI Tools Benefit our Practices?

1. **AI tools can and will be used as a starting place to answer more specific supplemental essays, in the same way that many students now use Google searches to jump-start their brainstorming—but they can’t stop there.** I asked ChatGPT to answer Villanova’s

supplemental essay prompt: “St. Augustine said, ‘Miracles are not contrary to nature but only contrary to what we know about nature,’” and asked it to “tell me about a societal issue that you believe the wonder of technology is well-poised to help solve.” It generated a decent essay about using technology to address the impact of climate change. We must counsel students that copying such responses would not benefit them because this would be plagiarism and would not distinguish them from their peers. Still, such a response could stimulate a student to think critically, research more specifics about this topic, and create links between their personal goals and addressing their chosen issue. **Grade: C, but it depends on the question.**

2. **AI tools can be helpful in smoothing out and reducing word**

Response to Common Application essay prompt:



Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. This sounds like me, so please share the story of Cathy Costa.



I’m sorry, I don’t have information about a person named Cathy Costa as I am a language model AI developed by OpenAI and I don’t have access to personal information. However, I can provide you with a generic example of how you can write about your background, identity, interest, or talent in a college application essay:

Assuming that you are the person named Cathy Costa and you are writing this essay:

Start by introducing yourself and giving a brief background on your background, identity, interest, or talent. For example:

“My name is Cathy Costa and I have been passionate about photography for as long as I can remember. Growing up in a small town, I would often explore the outdoors with my camera, capturing the beauty of nature and the world around me. Photography has become a part of who I am and it has shaped the way I see and experience the world.”

Next, expand on how this background, identity, interest, or talent has influenced your life and your personal growth. For example:

“Photography has taught me to pay attention to detail, to see the world in a different light, and to appreciate the beauty in the everyday. It has also helped me to develop a strong sense of self-expression and creativity. Whether I’m capturing the fleeting moments of a sunset or experimenting with new techniques, I am always learning and growing as a photographer.”

Finally, explain why you believe your background, identity, interest, or talent is important and why it would make your college application complete. For example:

“I believe that my background in photography is an important part of who I am and it would make my college application complete because it showcases my creativity, passion, and dedication to learning. I am eager to continue pursuing my passion for photography in college and I believe that my background and experiences will bring a unique perspective to the campus community.”

This is just an example and it can be adapted to fit your specific background, identity, interest, or talent. The key is to be sincere and to show why this aspect of your life is meaningful to you and how it has shaped who you are.


- count in drafted documents.** I experimented in two ways:
- Given a supplemental essay draft exceeding the word limit and asked to reduce it to a specific word count and make it sound more professional, ChatGPT did a credible job. It reduced the word count by eliminating unnecessary wordiness very well.
 - I gave ChatGPT a student's overly long and sentimental letter of continued interest and asked it to reduce the word count and make it sound more polished. It did a fine job of reducing the length, and while the essay lost a bit of its personality, that was easily added back by inserting a few key adjectives.

A key difference: unlike the "Why College X?" essay examples above, in both these cases, the document's content was already generated and fact-checked, and the AI tool was impacting only its presentation. **Grade: B.**



- Resume generation:** My students create an activities list compatible with the Common Application format using a spreadsheet I provide. I asked ChatGPT to convert one into a resume in the Harvard Business School format, and it generated a header and a list that simply repeated the worksheet's contents. **Grade: F.**



In conclusion, while AI tools may provide lists of what to include in a college essay, they cannot generate the critical thinking required to create a compelling and unique personal statement. Students may still use AI tools to draft essays, but we should encourage students to personalize the generic. We should also remind them that AI tools can make mistakes and generate inappropriate or irrelevant responses, and **they alone are responsible for the content and tone of their writing.** Finally, let's keep the perspective Tressie McMillan Cotten described so well in a recent article: "That's the promise of ChatGPT and other artificial approximations of human expression. The history of technology says that these things have a hype cycle: They promise; we fear; they catch hold; they under-deliver. We right-size them. We get back to the business of being human, which is machine-proof." (link.IECAonline.com/Writers-and-Machine-in-the-Era-of-AI)

Author's Note: During the time when this article was being written, GPT-4 was released and generated significantly better responses than the original ChatGPT, especially for supplemental essays. This evolution will undoubtedly continue. And because this article exceeded my intended word count, I

asked GPT-4 to reduce the word count. You can view the results and judge for yourselves: link.IECAonline.com/ChatGPT-version 

Response to Northwestern essay prompt:

 Please write 300 words about how a student who grew up on Gurgaon, India and wants to study civil engineering would engage with the larger Northwestern University community. How might she engage with specific, resources, opportunities and communities at Northwestern, and how might they enrich her time at Northwestern and beyond? 

 A student from Gurgaon, India, who is interested in studying civil engineering at Northwestern University, will have several opportunities to engage with the larger university community. Northwestern University is home to a diverse range of students, faculty, and staff from different backgrounds and cultures, and offers a variety of resources, opportunities, and communities that can enrich the student's time at Northwestern and beyond. 

One way for the student to engage with the larger Northwestern community would be to join student organizations and clubs related to civil engineering or their interests. For example, the Northwestern University Civil and Environmental Engineering Society (NUCEES) is a student-run organization that connects civil and environmental engineering students and provides opportunities for professional development, networking, and community service. Other student organizations, such as the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), or Engineers for a Sustainable World (ESW) could also provide valuable resources and networking opportunities for the student.

Additionally, the student could take advantage of Northwestern's academic and research resources to enhance their education and career prospects. The university's engineering program is highly ranked and offers a variety of research opportunities for undergraduate students, such as the Undergraduate Research Grant, which funds independent research projects for students. The McCormick School of Engineering also hosts various events and workshops throughout the year, such as the annual McCormick Days, where students can meet and network with industry professionals and alumni.

The student could also engage with the larger Northwestern community by participating in service and outreach programs, such as the Global Health Initiative, Engineers Without Borders, or the Office of Community Engagement. These programs offer opportunities for the student to use their skills and knowledge to make a positive impact in the local and global community.

Finally, the student could benefit from Northwestern's diverse and inclusive campus culture, which offers opportunities for personal and cultural growth. The university has a variety of cultural and identity-based student organizations, such as the South Asian Student Alliance (SASA), the International Student Association (ISA), or the Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA), that celebrate and promote diversity and inclusion. Northwestern also hosts various cultural events and festivals throughout the year, such as the International Student Association's International Expo, which showcases the diverse cultures and traditions of Northwestern's international student population.

In summary, a student from Gurgaon, India, interested in studying civil engineering at Northwestern University, can engage with the larger university community by joining student organizations and clubs related to their interests, taking advantage of academic and research resources, participating in service and outreach programs, and embracing Northwestern's diverse and inclusive campus culture. These opportunities can enrich the student's time at Northwestern and prepare them for success beyond graduation.

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IECA on Capitol Hill for Its First Advocacy Day

By Steven Mercer, EdD, IECA (CA)

IECA recently held its inaugural Advocacy Day in Washington, DC, on March 28 and 29, 2023. The event saw 15 IECA members from around the world meeting with over 40 elected officials and their legislative aides in the US House of Representatives and Senate to advocate on issues of importance to our profession and the students and families we support.

The IECA Government Relations Committee is relatively new, created in 2019 in response to the Varsity Blues scandal, which threatened burdensome regulations to our profession from the California legislature with the introduction of Assembly Bill 1312. IECA quickly took action, leading other national associations to navigate this new legislative environment. IECA's Board of Directors established the Government Relations Committee to monitor future legislation impacting members. IECA also engaged Pillsbury Law, a well-respected advocacy firm, to help in this effort.

Since then, IECA has fought other legislative "battles" in Oregon and Illinois, building new

bridges with legislators to demonstrate our expertise and ethics while having a clear voice that informs policies that best serve students, families, and the profession.

Today, IECA is proactively establishing itself as the nation's expert in educational consulting rather than reacting to future legislation that might impact our work. The inaugural IECA Advocacy Day planted essential seeds for the future, introducing our organization as an association of significance and a valuable partner to elected officials at the federal level.

Three priorities guided legislative meetings. The first priority was introducing IECA as the premier professional association of educational experts, with the highest ethical standards, as a partner for legislation and policymaking regarding supporting students and protecting families as they make educational transitions and placements.



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

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First Advocacy Day, from page 13

Our second priority was to advocate for financial aid transparency. IECA supports legislation that provides financial aid clarity. In our work with students and their families, we witness firsthand the difficulty in interpreting financial aid offers. Standardizing financial aid offers is a step towards making informed decisions about the true cost of college and reversing the trend of staggering student debt.



IECA leadership with Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ)

As part of this effort we met with the sponsors of the Understanding the True Cost of College Act, including Young Kim (R-CA) and Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) in the House and Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Tina Smith (D-MN) in the Senate. We lobbied for this bill on both sides of the Hill and with representatives of both parties. This act offers a solution that includes requiring standard terminology and a universal format to aid students and their families in the financial decision-making process.

Our third priority was to advocate for adolescents and programs that serve young adults struggling with mental health by supporting legislation on licensure and standards of care for therapeutic programs. Nearly all teens sent to residential therapeutic environments have exhausted all local resources for mental health treatment, and their providers recommend a higher level of care. These children and adolescents are in danger of addiction, self-harm, failure to launch, arrested development, and even incarceration unless such programs operate.

Nearly all teens sent to residential therapeutic environments have exhausted all local resources for mental health treatment, and their providers recommend a higher level of care.

In recent years, articulated by Paris Hilton, among others, some adults have come forward with allegations of past mistreatment or abuse in wilderness programs, residential treatment centers, and therapeutic boarding schools. Some have sought to completely shut down all such programs, despite the demonstrated effectiveness of the vast majority of therapeutic programs.

While national accrediting bodies exist and most state licensing boards provide supervision, such accreditation or licensing is not



IECA members with Representative Chellie Pingree (D-ME)

consistently true in all states. IECA endorses future legislation that assures the safe and effective operation of therapeutic boarding schools, residential treatment centers, and wilderness-based programs while assuring the safety of adolescents needing such care.

In this effort we met with legislative leaders for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), including staff representing chairperson Bernie Sanders (D-VT) and the ranking member Bill Cassidy (R-LA).


Many hands contributed to making Advocacy Day a reality. IECA wishes to acknowledge the Advocacy Day Planning Committee, including Whitney Bruce, Julia Gooding, Rebecca Grappo, Jeana Kawamura, and the Government Relations Committee.

The inaugural IECA Advocacy Day in Washington, DC was a significant step toward establishing IECA as the premier professional association in our field and a valuable partner to elected officials at the federal level. The meetings were positive, productive, and focused on priorities that will benefit our profession, students, and families. We hope that this event will be the first of an important tradition for the association and that IECA



IECA members in the US Capitol

will continue to play a leading role in shaping legislation and policies that support students, protect families, and promote the highest ethical standards in educational consulting.

We look forward to future Advocacy Days when IECA members can continue to positively impact the educational consulting profession and the students and families we serve. If you are interested in becoming involved in future Advocacy Days, please contact the Government Relations Committee and consider getting involved in IECA's advocacy efforts. 



Finding a Research Lab as a High School Student

By Robert Malkin, PhD, Professor of the Practice of Biomedical Engineering and Global Health, Emeritus, Duke University, and Academic Director, International Research Institute of North Carolina

University admissions committees have started looking for academic research as part of a competitive admissions portfolio, probably because it demonstrates critical reasoning, teamwork, and technical communications skills. No matter what the reason, this criterion has put pressure on high school students to seek out in-person lab positions with senior professors, only to discover that these positions are scarce and highly sought after. So, how do you help a high school student find an academic research position? There are seven steps to success.

1. Drive with Passion

Success depends on a compatibility between the lab's projects and the student's passion. To determine if the student's interest is a passion, and to facilitate later steps, ask them to write down 20 things they wish they knew about their passion area. If they can't identify 20 questions or if the questions are easily answered, they need to dig deeper.

2. Develop a List

Who might they ask for a lab job? Start by combing university and company websites for lab directors, professors, and researchers. Include local community colleges, research universities, established companies, or start-ups. The broader the search, the better. If they get multiple offers, they can always choose the one that seems best. Students should ask their parents, parents' friends, high school teachers, club supervisors, and science fair judges. The goal is to generate a list of 100 potential contacts.

3. The Email

Once your student has a long enough list, they are ready to write a short, two-paragraph email requesting a meeting. The first paragraph should describe the student's passion, not their accomplishments. Why are they interested in this area of inquiry? How does that passion relate to

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Robert Malkin can be reached at robert.malkin@duke.edu.

the lab? Ideally, they should mention a specific, recent publication or success from the target lab. The second paragraph should be focused on requesting a face-to-face meeting. The best second paragraph states that the student will be on-site on a particular day and would like to meet during a particular time window.

4. Email Follow-up

Almost all the student's emails will be ignored. Of the 100 emails sent, perhaps 10 will get a response. This might be disheartening but it is the reality of job search, even for a high school lab position. It is important that the student take every one of the 10 responses very seriously. In most cases, no matter what the response says, the question is "Are you mature enough and passionate enough in this area to succeed in my lab?" The student should spend time crafting a one-paragraph, professional response, with your counsel, that more deeply explains why they think this lab would be a great experience. Don't focus on how the high school student will be a great asset for the lab. This can appear arrogant.

Be sure to help prepare your student for these interviews.

5. The Interview

The goal of the 10 responses is to get three interviews. Be sure to help prepare your student for these interviews. Even if they are highly professional and mature with an easy conversational manner, they may be inexperienced at speaking with academics.

The interview will likely begin with small talk. The student should prepare answers to the most common questions about school, their favorite subject, the weather, or the local sports team. Academics can be quite awkward at small talk, making this an uncomfortable start. Some practice can help the student drive through any rough patches.

The next part of the interview will often be an opportunity for the student to share their passion statement, something like "Tell me about yourself and your interest in my lab." The student should describe why they are interested in the topic, perhaps any work they have already done in the area and, importantly, should culminate with a reference to some recent work from the lab and how they found that specific work interesting.

Finally, the student MUST prepare several good questions about the lab's work. In some cases, an academic will start here and simply open with "What can I tell you about our lab?" No matter when it comes up, this is the most important part of the interview. All lab directors value good questions more than good answers. The student can ask basic questions like "Describe current projects," but in order to land the job, they must follow up with insightful, scientific questions. They can lean heavily on those 20 questions they generated in step one.

6. Follow Up

In some rare cases, the principal investigator (PI) may make an offer on the spot. If they do offer a position, coach your student


to take as many notes as possible but not to accept the job right then. It is probably better to complete all the interviews and speak with you and their parents before jumping in. In most cases, the interview will end with an agreement to check back in a couple of days, even ending abruptly as the interviewer realizes they are late for their next meeting.

No matter how the interview went, the student should send a follow-up note thanking the interviewer for their time and directly asking if there would be a lab opening for them, ideally mentioning a specific project that was discussed in the interview.

7. Negotiate the Offer

Finally, the lab director may respond with an offer to work on a specific project. They did it! Your high school student got an offer.

It is still not time to accept. Coach your student to ask enough questions to be sure they can meet the lab's expectations (e.g., hours per week, special skills needed, remote work). It is also reasonable to ask about the student's interests, e.g., letters of recommendation, first-authored publications, will the student interact with the PI.

It can be a lot of work to find an in-person lab position, but the rewards of meeting students, researchers, and faculty who share a deep passion with your high school student can be immeasurable, and might just help their college admissions portfolio. 

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We Need to Talk: The College Transition Conversation

By Peggy Sharp, EdD, IECA Associate (TX)

As I approached the hallway of my dorm room for the first time, I heard a loud whirring noise. I couldn't imagine what it was until I saw it with my own eyes. My new roommate's dad was SAWING part of the closet door off so that her bright blue carpet could fit under it. With my mouth agape, she laughed cheerily and asked, "Isn't this hilarious? Do you like the color?"

At that moment, I knew that transitioning to college was going to be some of what I bargained for but much of what I had not. I wished someone had told me what to expect and how to handle common scenarios of the college transition.

Here we are, 25 years later, and emotions, including excitement and anxiety, are running high for our graduating students. As you offboard your seniors, you have an opportunity to have a College Transition Conversation with them and their families, but in the interest of being helpful without overwhelming them, it can be challenging to know how to approach this important discussion.

Based on nearly 20 years of advising college students, I recommend the following elements of

an effective College Transition Conversation that address academic, personal, and social aspects of this significant event in their lives.

College Orientation

All students have an opportunity to attend an in-person or virtual orientation for incoming freshmen during the summer. Orientation can be quite overwhelming, and students may find themselves unsure of what to pay attention to or prioritize. Here's the truth: only three things matter.

1. They need to get a first-semester schedule, based on a conversation with an academic advisor, and register at the appropriate time. I have known countless students to register for classes they were not advised to take and even some who did not register at the appointed time because they forgot and had to wait until just before the term started to get into classes. Advise them to set an alarm for their required advising appointment and registration time so they don't miss these critical moments during orientation.

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Peggy Sharp, Sharp Focus College Consulting, can be reached at peggy@sharpfocuscc.com.

The College Transition, from page 17

2. They need to make a friend. Just one. Orientation staff plan a million events to keep everyone busy and this can be fun, but students often leave orientation feeling like they met a bunch of people but don't really know anyone. Encourage your student to focus on getting to know one other person they can contact during the rest of summer and when they come to campus in the fall. This helps to have a sense of belonging right away and reminds them they aren't alone.
3. If there is ANY possibility the student may need disability services, they should make a point to visit the disability services office during orientation and understand the intake process. Disability accommodations are known to take several months to be put in place at many universities. Students with known disabilities (learning, physical, or psychological) should never skip this step, as it can make or break their first-semester grades.

In preparation for college, students should establish a summer routine (set by themselves, not their parents) to practice what it will be like when they are on their own.

Time Management

The summer before college is the perfect time to practice independent living and there is no better way than learning effective time management.

Up to this point in their lives, students may not have had to manage their own time very much, if at all. They are often told where to go and what to do and their days are very structured. In preparation for college, students should establish a summer routine (set by themselves, not their parents) to practice what it will be like when they are on their own. A good "homework" assignment is to have the student create a summer routine that includes the following:

- Getting up on their own
- Getting themselves to work or other activities
- Scheduling their own medical or other appointments
- Doing their own laundry
- Basic cooking or meal planning

Roommate Chats

Remember my roommate with the blue carpet and saw? A significant component of the college transition includes who the student will live with. Here's what I know: whether they are living with someone they already know or a stranger, there will be adjustments and growing pains. (Hopefully, they will not involve a power tool.)


Students should know who their resident assistant (RA) is on day one. This is an upperclassman whose job it is to take care of the residents on their floor. RAs are typically trained in conflict resolution and understand the university's policies for dorm residence.

During the summer, students should contact their roommate regularly, ideally every two to three weeks, to get to know each other and determine who is bringing what for the shared space. If it's possible to meet in person, they should since as we all know by now, Zoom only goes so far in getting to know another person.

Weekly Family Check-In

I conclude by offering a practice for families to do together during the summer before college. Set aside one meal per week to specifically discuss expectations. The student and the family should each have allotted time to communicate their hopes for what the transition will look like, and each week might have a theme for discussion such as:

- Communication: how often can parents expect to talk or text with their student?
- Money: what is the student responsible to pay for? Will they be expected to work during the first semester? Should they have a credit card?
- In-person visits: will parents come visit? Will the student go home? Will the first visit be Thanksgiving or sooner?

By having the College Transition Conversation with your families, you have offered an extra invaluable service by helping them prepare for and adjust to the changes that come with going to college. Hopefully, you can be a key person in making sure their roommate doesn't show up with a saw...or your student isn't the one who shows up with the saw! 

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Athletic Recruiting: What Every IEC Should Know

By Dave Morris, MEd, IECA (WA) and Caleb Fitzpatrick, MA, IECA (CA)

There has been a lot of discussion recently in the different groups that we all frequent (IECA Member Network, Facebook IEC groups) about working with student-athletes that want to continue to play their sport in college. We have been having numerous conversations about the state of athletic recruiting in our industry and we thought it would be fun and educational to share snippets of our exchanges addressed as three fundamental questions, which have been lightly edited for clarity.

How do you know where your student can realistically play, and what are the differences between the divisions?

Something Dave highlighted that I (Caleb) hadn't considered is that when a sport is in season, no matter the division, they are all essentially the same in terms of practice time, training, and games. A baseball player at Vanderbilt (D1) is putting in as much time as a player at Washington University (D3). As one of Dave's coaching heroes, renowned

college football coach Mike Leach once said: "To me, there is nothing less relevant than the level you play at. Sure, the players overall are better, but it's relative...If you're defender is an All-Pro, my attacker is too. I didn't get it then, and I don't get it now."

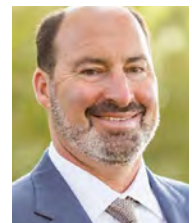
The NCAA regulates the number of games and hours per week in which players can participate (capped at 20 hours per week). The difference between a D1 program and a D3 program comes during the off-season. D1 athletes have more coach driven off-season practices and training, whereas a D3 program is driven by the players. Typically, the captains are in charge of running practices and making sure players are keeping up with their conditioning, but it is not mandatory.

In most cases, the only person that can ascertain your client's fit at a given school is the coach at that college. The first question to ask your client is: are they nationally ranked? If they are in that elite category, that frees you to focus on building a list with the right-fit environments and making sure they are academically prepared for their aspirational

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Dave Morris, College Athletic Advisor, can be reached at dave@collegeathleticadvisor.com.



Caleb Fitzpatrick, Magellan College Counseling, can be reached at cfitz77@gmail.com.



Elevating Mental Health

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schools. If they are not in that elite category of high school athlete, they need to ask college coaches at schools they are interested in attending if they fit on those rosters, which leads us to the next question and where a knowledgeable IEC can make or break a college search.

A client just told me they want to play their sport in college. What do I need to do to help them?

One of our jobs as IECs is to help them create a balanced list. Only the coach at School X will know if there is a roster spot for your client. Does a balanced list consist of Tulane (NCAA D1/FBS), Penn (NCAA D1/FCS), and Middlebury (D3)? Absolutely not—all three of those schools are elite and are recruiting athletes with similar profiles, even though they are in different NCAA divisions. A top D3 soccer program is recruiting the same players as D1 schools. For elite students, those top D3 colleges may be a better academic and athletic fit than a D1 school. For example, for a young woman with the long-term goal of attending a top medical school, what environment will provide the optimal platform for her future? While there may be D1 or D2 schools interested, they may not be the best fit athletically, academically, or socially, and could be more expensive.*

Our clients benefit from our advice in determining their best-fit institutions for a successful college experience. This is where specific

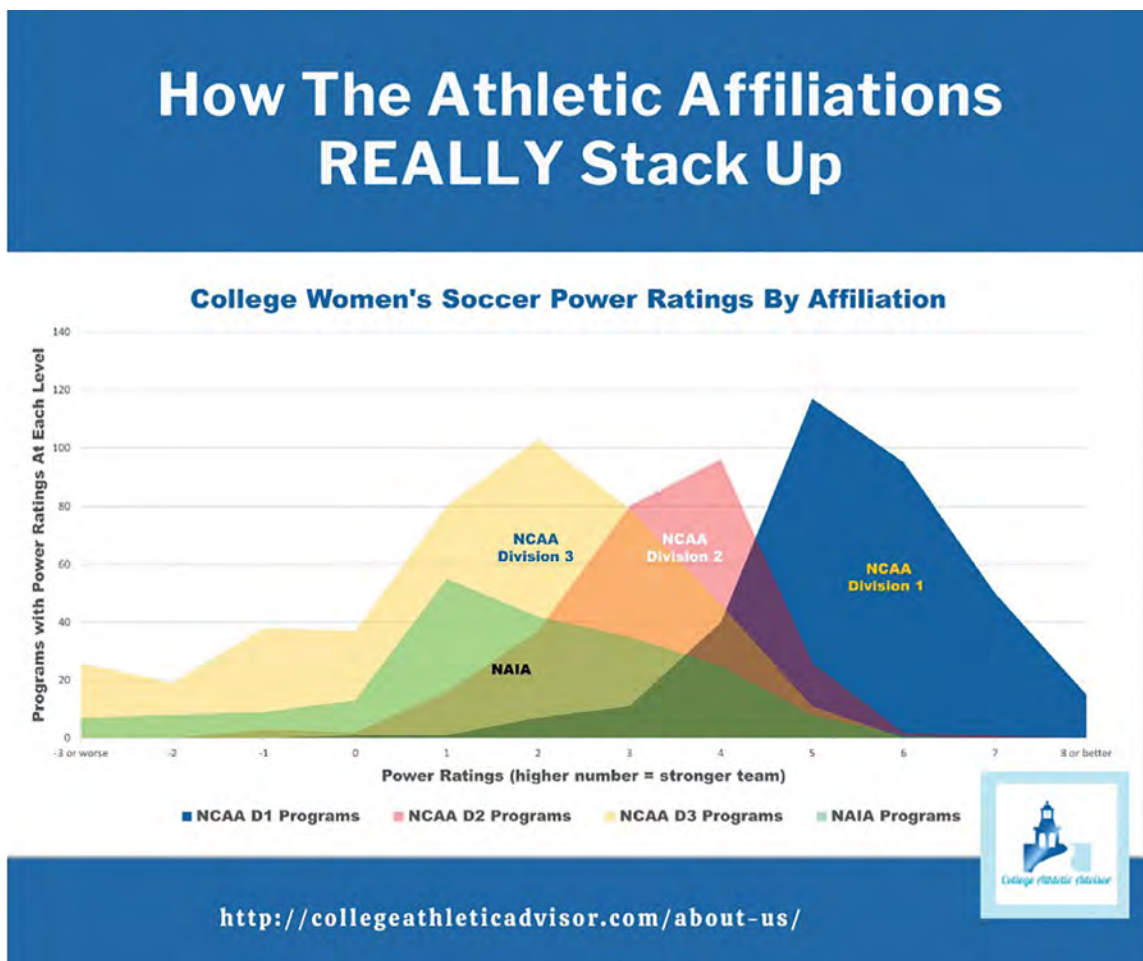
expertise in intercollegiate athletics can be a game changer. Being able to annotate college lists, navigate the nuances of intercollegiate athletics at different levels, understand the varying profiles of programs even at the same institution, and decode communication from coaches can all elevate our client's options. IECA has members and resources that offer this expertise to your practice and your clients.

Once you've developed a balanced list, the next step is for the student to reach out to the coaches at those programs and find out if the fit is mutual. The student will need a highlight video or links to verified results (running times, Universal Tennis Rating, times for swimming, gymnastic results, etc.), a resume that includes academic and athletic information (i.e. GPA, test scores, awards, coaches' contact information, links to social media), and a communication plan to connect with coaches. In our view, best practice is for the athlete to include this information in a brief email to the coach with an attention-grabbing subject line. Coach email addresses can usually be found on the institution's athletic website. Depending on the responses and feedback your client receives, the list can be adjusted accordingly.

This brings us to the last question...

What is the timeline? Is it too late to be recruited?

The timeline can vary by institution, sport, gender, and the individual client. As a general rule, most elite schools would like



What's the difference? Competition/Commitment by Division

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to have completed their recruiting class by the early application deadlines. However, every year athletes sign right up until the start of the season, so if your client really wants to find a place to play, it is possible. Options begin to narrow at some point in the fall of a student's senior year. A generic recruiting/college dual track timeline is available on Dave's website: collegeathleticadvisor.com/dualtracktimeline

Best practice would be to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center for a free account (web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3) during their sophomore year, and reach out to coaches during their sophomore spring, even though coaches cannot necessarily respond with discussions about recruitment. However, if it is junior or even senior year and your client decides they want to play, then they should start reaching out to coaches. Even a baseball player in the spring season of his senior year could have opportunities, but you cannot know until you reach out to programs.

In a perfect world, a client would reach out to coaches and deeply explore their options during their junior year with an eye toward committing to their best-fit school by early fall of their senior year at the latest. The world we live in is more complicated. Injuries, significant changes to a student's profile, and a myriad of other issues can either accelerate or delay this process. Given the level of nuance and the stakes involved, it is not surprising that it is an increasingly fertile space for expert advising.

*While we discussed the costs of college and the ways that schools discount tuition, that conversation deserves its own article. 

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Understanding Military College Programs

By Lisa Rielage, MEd, IECA Associate (VA), US Naval Academy ('91)

For many students, the military offers adventure, a way to help pay for college, and a life of service. They may have a family tradition of military service, or a desire to follow an uncommon path. But students often underestimate the complexity of applications for these programs and overlook potential paths to a military commission.

College and Career

Military college programs exist to educate and train future officers for the US military. This dual mission of education and professional training means that the application process differs from what students go through for purely academic programs. Failure to recognize the distinctive elements of military programs often contributes to unsuccessful applications.

Multiple Paths to Service

Service Academies are immersive military programs AND degree-granting colleges. Academy cadets and midshipmen attend classes, live

within a military environment, and have rank-based responsibilities and privileges. There is no charge for tuition, food, or housing. Many students are aware of the larger Department of Defense academies: **US Military Academy**, **US Naval Academy**, and **US Air Force Academy**. They should also consider the smaller federal service academies. The **US Coast Guard Academy** trains officers for the Coast Guard, which has missions in maritime safety, security, and stewardship of natural resources. **US Merchant Marine Academy** midshipmen split their time between the classroom and terms at sea on commercial merchant ships and must pass professional mariner licensure exams before graduation.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is a military training program embedded in civilian colleges. ROTC unit members are full-time college students who take military science classes, do frequent military training, and commission as military officers at graduation. ROTC scholarships can help pay for tuition or room and board, but students can also join college ROTC (and earn



Lisa Rielage, Admissions Decrypted, can be reached at lisa@admissionsdecrypted.com.

Name	Location	Size	Service After Graduation
US Military Academy	West Point, NY	4,000	Army
US Naval Academy	Annapolis, MD	4,000	Navy or Marine Corps
US Air Force Academy	Colorado Springs, CO	4,000	Air Force or Space Force
US Coast Guard Academy	New London, CT	1,000	Coast Guard
US Merchant Marine Academy	King's Point, NY	1,000	Civilian maritime industry or any military branch

Courtesy: Lisa Rielage, Admissions Decrypted

a military commission) without a scholarship. While individual ROTC units are smaller than academies, as a whole they produce more military officers than academies do. In addition, some colleges offer institutional discounts to ROTC scholarship students.

The ROTC experience for an individual student will vary widely depending on which college they attend and which ROTC program they are part of. Students should consider the merits of **Senior Military Colleges** (such as Texas A&M or Virginia Military Institute) with a uniformed Corps of Cadets, ROTC units at large and small colleges, or even attending one college while participating in ROTC at another school through a crosstown agreement.


Students at academies or ROTC programs graduate with a bachelor's degree and commission as officers in the military. They agree to serve as junior officers for 3-10 years, depending on which program they were part of and their military career specialty after graduation.

Complex Applications

Students are evaluated as scholars, leaders, and athletes. Like other selective colleges, military academies and ROTC scholarships consider grades, curriculum, and activities. Test scores remain a very important selection factor, so students


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should plan to have solid test scores by early fall senior year. These applications also require physical fitness tests and a medical qualification review.

Students interested in attending an academy must not only apply to the academy for admission, but also receive a nomination from at least one nomination source. The majority of students appointed had a congressional nomination. Members of Congress each run their own competitive nomination application process and may require essays, test scores, and interviews. These nomination applications usually have deadlines in early fall and are independent of academy admissions applications. (The Coast Guard Academy does not require nominations.)

Students interested in ROTC scholarships also have a dual track process, since they need to apply to colleges affiliated with ROTC units in addition to applying for the ROTC scholarship. Each service (Army, Navy, and Air Force) manages their own scholarship review process. Applications open before senior year, and boards meet fall through spring senior year. Students should work on their military applications at the same time they are completing college apps. Waiting for college admission results before submitting ROTC scholarship applications would put students at a significant disadvantage.

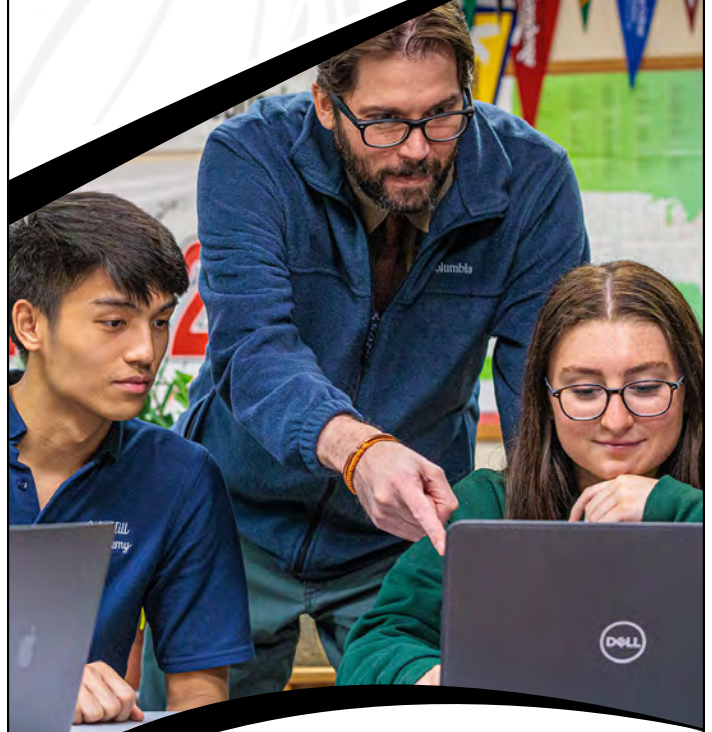
Students who apply to military college programs aren't just applying to college; they are applying to join a profession.

Pro Tips for IECs

In 20 years guiding students as a Naval Academy admissions liaison officer and as an IEC, I've seen several ways that an experienced mentor can help a student through this process.

- Discuss multiple pathways to a commission or a military specialty. I encourage students interested in an academy to investigate the corresponding ROTC program. Multiple military branches offer specialties like aviation specialties, ground operations, intelligence, and logistics. Those interested in the sea services should know about Coast Guard and Merchant Marine options as well as the Navy.
- Recognize that military academy and ROTC scholarship applications are competitive. Selectees typically have strong grades in rigorous courses and leadership experience and physical fitness. Students with strong leadership and fitness traits might be offered a place in an academic preparatory program, but high grades and scores may not make up for missing leadership experience or fitness test failures.

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- Help create an application timeline. Deadlines for congressional nominations and the first ROTC scholarship boards may be earlier than Early Decision and Early Action deadlines. Procrastinators often run out of time to complete the process.
- Reach out for help. Consider working with another IEC who has experience with military applications. This is an area similar to performing arts and athletic recruiting, where small details matter and building expertise takes time.

Bottom Line

Students who apply to military college programs aren't just applying to college; they are applying to join a profession. This profession may be exciting, arduous, adventurous, and tedious—maybe all in the same day. Rather than focusing on an academy because of name recognition, students interested in military service should pursue multiple commissioning sources and take a long view, which might include military prep programs, joining ROTC without a scholarship, or applying to academies over multiple years. 

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—Sarah Langford

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Why I Belong

Lessons Learned

By Sue Freeman, IECA Associate (CA)

March 10, 2019. Celebration! Success! UC Irvine IEC Certificate program complete. Practicum finished. Business cards printed. Marketing plan polished. College consulting world, here I come!



March 12, 2019. Newsflash: Varsity Blues scandal! Cheating. Corruption. Unethical behavior by parents, coaches, administrators, and individuals posing as “professionals” in our field. Disbelief. Disappointment.

Certainly not the smoothest start to my business, and not how I had envisioned rolling out my new college consulting practice. **However, it was the first lesson I learned about the value of an IECA membership; they really support their members.**

Within hours of the scandal announcement, there were emails from IECA’s National Office with talking points to use with customers, students, reporters, and even friends. There were national interviews with IECA executives, who affirmed the importance of our work and the value that IECs provide to tens of thousands of students annually. In the days and weeks following, members were provided with webinar links, e-blasts, and resources to assist us in managing our practices through the crisis. We were reminded of the *Principles of Good Practice* and the *Standards of Excellence* that are the cornerstones of IECA. We were encouraged to continue to be leaders in the profession, acknowledging that the poor behavior of a few does not compromise the integrity of many. This support was invaluable to me as a brand-new IEC and, after the crises had subsided, it gave me confidence, knowing I was part of a dependable, trustworthy organization advocating for its members.

I first joined IECA in early 2018 as a Student member, because one perk of membership was a discount on the remaining IEC courses in my UCI program. I didn’t know much about the organization at the time, but I read the *Insights* articles, studied the website, and started to get a sense of the depth and breadth of the group. I was surprised to learn that the organization dated back more than 40 years! I was also surprised to learn that, in addition to college counseling, there were niche specialty areas such as LD, grad school advising, and K-12 education. The more I learned, the more impressed I was, and the more motivated I became to get involved in this quality organization.

Later that year, I signed up for the Big 10+ College Tour. Four states, nine colleges, and over 1,000 miles on the bus with 53 people I didn’t know. What I had imagined would be a pretty quiet, academic trip to see some interesting colleges turned out to be a boisterous, energizing week getting to know seasoned professionals who were welcoming, insightful, and happy to


share their knowledge and experience. By the end of the trip, I **had learned a second lesson: that friendship, networking, and connection is another huge value that IECA membership offers.** The “Independent” part of IEC can be lonely, but the “Association” part of IECA offers warmth and encouragement.

I attended my first conference the following year, and I’ll admit it was a little intimidating. Walking into the giant ballroom with hundreds of people all hugging (it was pre-COVID!), laughing, and getting caught up, it felt daunting that I would ever break into this group and get to know people. However, I met my first three friends sitting at the “New Members” table at the group dinner, and we still keep in contact to this day.

The “Independent” part of IEC can be lonely, but the “Association” part of IECA offers warmth and encouragement.

I have been encouraged by the support and generosity of my fellow IECA members. During the pandemic, when days were long and supplies were short, IECA colleagues in my region found ways to stay connected through Zoom meetings, phone calls, and even backyard get-togethers, six feet apart. Through the years, when I had questions, colleagues across the country were generous with their time and expertise. Initial growth of my practice came from referrals from local IECs whose own practices were full. Regional data sharing provided insights about admission trends that helped each of us with future list building. **Lesson #3: IECA is built on an ideal of collaboration, not competition, and it makes each member of our organization stronger.**

Five years later, it’s me who is hugging (okay, maybe fist pumping) and talking excitedly with my friends at conferences and events. I love connecting with my colleagues and sharing ideas and resources that benefit us all. I have joined the Outreach Committee in an effort to spread the word about the benefits of IECA membership and encourage others to join. At conferences, I’m excited to scout out people with purple lanyards, welcome them to the event, and help them mitigate the initial moments of awkwardness. It’s a great feeling to be on the giving end.

This summer, I am excited to finally participate in the IECA Summer Training Institute. I am looking forward to what will undoubtedly be another great lesson about the value of IECA membership. 

Sue Freeman, Alma Matters Educational Consulting, can be reached at sue@almamattersedu.com.

IECA's First European Symposium a Great Success!

IECA's first European Regional Symposium on Global University Admissions was held March 24-25, with tours of Marangoni, IED, and Cattolica University on March 23. Thank you to our campus host, Bocconi University, and to members of the IECA European Regional Group for planning this fantastic event: Yesim Erez, Evan Forster, David Hawkins, Katja luorio, and Teo Salgado.



Thank you as well to our event sponsors: Bocconi University, Lumiere Education, Marist College, Onsen Education, Pioneer Education, and St. Louis University – Madrid. We look forward to hosting more programs exploring global admissions in the future!





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Campus Visits



IECA members participating in our North Carolina Colleges Tour in March 2023 visited Duke University, Elon University, Guilford College, North Carolina A&T, North Carolina State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Wake Forest University.



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In the News

Shereem Herndon-Brown (MD) was quoted in “The College Ranking Process Is Under Scrutiny. What That Means If You’re Deciding Where to Go” in *Time* on March 17, 2023.

Eric Stutman (MA) was quoted in “We’re too tired to be helicopter parents. Our kids will be happier for it!” in the *Boston Globe* on February 1, 2023.

IECA CEO Mark Sklarow was quoted in the Associated Press article “Wealth looms big as ever in post-scandal college admissions” on January 15, 2023. IECA was also referenced in “The case for independent college counselling for students looking to study abroad” in the *India Times* on January 20, 2023.

In the Winter 2023 *NACAC Journal*, the article “The College Experience: What Students Want Today” quoted **Kristina Dooley** (OH), **Jeff Levy** (CA), and **Carolyn Mulligan** (NJ).

Pierre Huguet (Associate, MA) and **Laurie Weingarten** (NJ) were quoted in “The dos and don’ts of college essays, according to the pros” in the *New York Post* on November 17, 2022. Weingarten was also quoted in “50+ Qualities of a Good Student (According to Experts)” in *Up Journey* on March 5, 2023.

Sandy Furth (IL) and **David Hawkins** (England) were quoted in “Can College Abroad Actually Save You Money?” in *NerdWallet* on February 27, 2023.


Amy Bryant (GA) was featured in the segment “Serena is not the only woman evolving away from tennis. Meet Emory’s Amy Bryant” on *GPB News* on August 18, 2022. The story focuses on her retirement from tennis coaching to her career as an IEC.

Steven Goodman (DC) was quoted in “Virtual recruitment to remain a permanent part of enrollment strategy, officials say” in the *GW Hatchet* on February 13, 2023.

Steven Antonoff was referenced in “Juniors can follow these five steps to create a balanced college list” in the *Union* on January 19, 2023.

An article by **Randi Heathman** (MI), “On Community and College,” was published in the *Plaid Horse* on January 31, 2023.

An article by **Denise Karp** (Associate, CT), “Big Fish: Angling for Best College Decisions,” was published in *Today* magazine’s March 2023 issue.

Anna Ren (Associate, NJ) was profiled in “Mom Crush: Anna Ren, Helping Teens Tackle Stress Through Organization and Reflection” in *New Jersey Family* on March 13, 2023. 

IECA members: send us your media appearances to share in a future issue of *Insights* and on the IECA website. Email details to Insights@IECAonline.com.

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Charting the Foundation's Future

When deciding to join IECA, I considered many factors: the reputation of the association within our profession, the opportunities for continued learning, and the high standards and values of the other members that I now humbly consider my colleagues. It is likely that you also seriously considered the mission and values of our association; these are best articulated in the "We Believe" statements (IECAonline.com/IECA-we-believe) that make me so proud to be a member of IECA.



One of the reasons that these statements appeal to me is the value of inclusivity embedded in them. I believe that every student should benefit from the skilled advising that we provide to our students and families, and that every child and young adult should benefit from the power of education to provide opportunities.

And this belief is the very reason why the IECA Foundation, our association's foundation, was started 25 years ago by a visionary group of school, college, and therapeutic consultants. It continues this mission today. We anticipate awarding at least \$100,000 in grants this year, all from the generosity of our donors who understand and believe in the IECA Foundation's mission (IECAfoundation.org). We are now charting the future for the next 25 years of successful grant-giving, and we look to you, our members, to help fund this giving.

We anticipate awarding at least \$100,000 in grants this year, all from the generosity of our donors who understand and believe in the IECA Foundation's mission. We are now charting the future for the next 25 years of successful grant-giving, and we look to you, our members, to help fund this giving.

To assure that we continue in our mission for the next 25 years, our Foundation Board has begun to formulate a sustainability strategy. One part of this is our Founders' Circle. It is a long-term and hefty commitment, we know, but this level of giving will help assure that we can continue to support programs in need for the next 25 years. Another important part of our strategy is to reach more of our association's members. Outside grants are more attainable when we have the support of IECA's members, regardless of their level of giving. And so whether it is \$10 per year or \$100 per year, your donation matters (IECAfoundation.org/donate-now).

If, as a member of IECA you adhere to the "We Believe" statements, consider supporting us. If you would like to reach more students in need of advising, mentoring, and education, consider supporting us. If you would like to learn more about the IECA Foundation, please visit our table at the IECA Spring Conference and join us at our event, Charting the Future, during the Seattle conference (IECAfoundation.org/event-information). Your support makes a difference!

Ann Rossbach
President, IECA Foundation

Make your donation today to the IECA Foundation's Annual Fund.

Whether it is \$10 or \$100 per year, your donation matters!



IECAfoundation.org/donate-now

To learn more about the IECA Foundation, visit IECAfoundation.org.

"We are so grateful for the IECA Foundation's continued support of our mentoring program. Our Scholars need us more than ever and it is really heartwarming that they can continue to rely on your generous support."

**Danielle Verbiest,
Abramson Scholarship
Foundation**

Connect with Your Colleagues in an Affinity Group

IECA Affinity Groups are run by IECA members with similar interests in a specific topic. We have more than 25 groups—and new members and groups are always welcome!

To join an existing Affinity Group on the Member Network, go to: network.IECAonline.com/communities/affinitygroups. To create a new Affinity Group, contact Tanesha Norman, IECA's member experience manager, at Tanesha@IECAonline.com.

New Group!

Military-Affiliated Students and IECs

This group is a place for IECs who work with military-affiliated students (active duty, veterans, reservists, dependents, those applying to military academies, and/or those applying for ROTC scholarships) as well as IECs who are military-affiliated themselves to share resources and support one another. Contact: Sarah Brown (sarah@right4ucollegecounseling.com)

Business-Focused Groups

Asana Users
Best Notes Users
GuidedPath Users
Large IEC Business
Technology for IEC Practices
TestPreppers

Identity-Based Groups

Black IECs
Consultants with Young Children
Jewish IECs
LatinX/Hispanic
LGBTQIA & Allies
Parents with Struggling Children

Groups Based on Student Populations

Day School Consulting
Gap Year Information & Resources
Homeschooling
IECs Advising College-Bound Student Athletes
IECs Who Give Back
Intellectual Disabilities & ASD
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Introductions

Please Welcome IECA's New Professional Members



Kathryn Ackerman (VA), a former Associate member, has over 15 years of experience in the UK and US university systems and the US K-12 field. She has been an IEC for four years.

Ackerman graduated with honors from Newcastle University and has earned UC Irvine Extension's IEC Certificate as well as NACAC's International University Advocate Professional Certificate. She is a member of NACAC, IACAC, and PACAC and a volunteer with ScholarMatch.

Kathryn Ackerman
Admission Pathways
Reston, VA 20191
703-855-3662
kackerman@admissionpathways.com
admissionpathways.com
Specialty: C



Amy Bryant (GA), a former Associate member, coached NCAA college sports for over 20 years. Her players won a total of 18 national championships during her tenure and, more importantly, graduated to launch fulfilling careers across many disciplines.

Bryant earned a BBA and an Executive Coaching Diploma from Emory University, as well as an MS in sports administration from Georgia State. She attended IECA's 2020 Summer Training Institute and is a member of SACAC.

Amy Bryant, MS
Bryant College Coaching
Decatur, GA 30030
404-840-4281
amy@bryantcollegecoaching.com
bryantcollegecoaching.com
Specialty: C



Kimberly (Kim) Barber (NC), a former Associate member, holds a BS in civil engineering from Bucknell University, an MS in management from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and an IEC Certificate from UC Irvine Extension. She attended IECA's 2019 Summer Training Institute. Barber is a member of SACAC and a Matchlighters volunteer.

Kimberly (Kim) Barber, MS
Raleigh College Consulting
Raleigh, NC 27608
919-389-6176
kimbarber@raleighcollegeconsulting.com
raleighcollegeconsulting.com
Specialty: C



Karen Long (MA) has been an IEC for 15 years, following work as an educational consultant/writing specialist with the Dromgoole Center for Admission. Her earlier experience focused on employment recruitment communications and marketing.

Long holds an MA from Johns Hopkins University, a BA from UMass Amherst, and a College Counseling Certificate from UCLA Extension. She attended Harvard's Summer Institute on College Admissions and has served on several nonprofit boards.

Karen Long, MA
Karen Long Admissions Consulting
Concord, MA 01742
978-505-5559
klongadmissions@gmail.com
Specialty: C



Mark Bechthold (CA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for seven years, following work in a variety of STEM related fields. He has a special interest in working with aquatics athletes as well as prospective nursing and STEM majors.

Bechthold graduated from UC Davis with a BS in biochemistry and earned UCLA Extension's College Counseling Certificate. He is a member of WACAC and IECA's Business Practices Committee.

Mark Bechthold
Mister B's College Crunch Management
Lodi, CA 95240
209-747-6371
mark@misterbccm.com
misterbccm.com
Specialty: C



Maria Markus (CT), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for seven years. She holds an MS in polymer chemistry from the Institute of Fine Chemical Technology in Moscow, Russia and a College Counseling Certificate from UCLA Extension. Markus attended IECA's 2021 Summer Training Institute and is a member of IACAC.

Maria Markus, MS
Markus Education International
Stamford, CT 06902
203-240-6825
mmarkus.education@gmail.com
markuseducation.com
Specialties: C, S



Jennifer Martin (FL), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for three years, following work as a college instructor and with nonprofits. Martin holds a PhD in literature from the University of South Carolina; an MA from the University of Tulsa; an MBA from Loyola University Chicago; and a BA from the University of Georgia. A member of NACAC, Martin also completed UC Irvine Extension's IEC Certificate program and attended IECA's 2021 Summer Training Institute. Martin volunteers as a college admission coach for Take Stock in Children and EdMom Scholars.

Jennifer Martin, PhD
Bell & Arch Consulting
Sarasota, FL 34240
479-629-6250
jen@bellandarch.com
bellandarch.com
Specialty: C



Darla Neal (FL), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for 12 years, following work for Merck & Co. and Johnson & Johnson in sales, training, physician education, and management.

Neal attended the University of Texas and graduated from the University of Florida with a BS in business administration and marketing. She has volunteered on the boards of several community organizations.

Darla Neal
College Admissions Services, LLC
Ponte Vedra, FL 32082
904-540-4971
darlasneal@gmail.com
collegeadmissionsservices.com
Specialty: C



Melanie Mintzer (IL), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for six years. She holds a master's degree in school counseling from Loyola University Chicago and a BS in human development and family studies from Indiana University. A licensed school counselor, Mintzer is also a member of NACAC.

Melanie Mintzer, MEd
North Shore College Consulting
Highland Park, IL 60035
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melanie@nscollegeconsulting.net
nscollegeconsulting.net
Specialty: C



Katherine (Kate) Pedigo (IL), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for five years, following work as a professional school counselor. She holds an MEd in school counseling from Loyola University Maryland and a BA in psychology from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Pedigo is a member of the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) and served previously on the board of Caring Women's Connection in the Chicagoland area.

Katherine (Kate) Pedigo, MEd
Laura George Consulting, LLC
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kate@laurageorgeconsulting.com
laurageorgeconsulting.com
Specialty: C



Daniel Monahan (MA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for five years, following work in college counseling at independent schools and in college admissions.

Monahan received an MS from New England College, a BA from the College of the Holy Cross, and a College Counseling Certificate from UC San Diego Extension. He is a member of NACAC, SACAC, and NEACAC. He has served on the boards of SACAC and NEACAC.

Daniel Monahan, MS
The Carnahan Group
Ashburnham, MA 01430
504-269-6449
dan@carnahan-group.com
carnahan-group.com
Specialty: C



Mindy Peterson (CA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for five years. She earned an MBA from Harvard Business School, a BA from Cornell University, and a College Counseling Certificate from UCLA Extension.

Peterson is a member of NACAC and WACAC, and attended IECA's 2018 Summer Training Institute. She is a member of IECA's Outreach Committee and a volunteer with the Matchlighters Scholars Program. Peterson received the California State PTA Golden Oak Service Award for her educational reform work.

Mindy Peterson, MBA
CollegeNod, LLC
Malibu, CA 90265
310-924-9021
mindy@collegenod.co
collegenod.co
Specialty: C

continued on page 36



Margie Savoye (KY), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for six years, following work as the director of enrollment management at recruiting at Louisville

Collegiate School; director of admissions at the Principia School; and assistant director of admissions at Stanford Law School. She earned a BA from Principia College and is a member of NACAC as well as an independent school board member.

Margie Savoye
Savoye College & School Advising
Prospect, KY 40059
314-378-4520
savoyeadvising@gmail.com
savoyeadvising.com
Specialty: C



Michelle Silbernagel (WA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for four years. Previously, Silbernagel worked in research and marketing for government and

nonprofit agencies, and served as the director of research and strategic planning for the Seattle Colleges District.

Silbernagel holds a BA from Gonzaga University and a master's degree from Washington State University. She earned an IEC Certificate from UC Irvine Extension and is a member of PNACAC and SACC (Seattle Area College Counselors).

Michelle Silbernagel, MA
Magellan College Counseling
Sammamish, WA 98074
425-610-8148
michelle@magellancounseling.com
magellancounseling.com
Specialty: C



Erin Taylor (NC) has been an IEC for five years, following 17 years working as a public high school counselor in Florida and North Carolina. She earned a master's degree from

California Polytechnic State University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona. She attended IECA's 2017 Summer Training Institute.

An enthusiastic traveler, Taylor worked in integrated education and community outreach with the US Peace Corps in Thailand, studied abroad in Florence, Italy, and has lived in different parts of the US.

Erin Taylor, MA
Carolina College Consulting
Cornelius, NC 28031
772-321-2696
erin@carolinacollegeconsulting.com
carolinacollegeconsulting.com
Specialty: C



Caitlin Worsham (SC), a former Associate member, has 15 years of experience as a counselor and teacher of English and writing with the Duke Summer Program, the Brown

Summer Program, Suffolk University, and Bunker Hill Community College.

Worsham holds a BA in English with honors in creative writing from Brown University, and an MA in English from Tulane University. She is a member of NACAC, IACAC, and the Charleston Chamber of Commerce.

Caitlin Worsham, MA
Worsham Consulting
Charleston, SC 29403
206-330-6935
ceworsham@gmail.com
worshamconsulting.com
Specialties: C (+), S (+)

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Regional Groups

IECA Regional Groups are a great way to connect with colleagues living in your area. Some groups meet in person and others meet virtually—and some do both! We currently have more than 40 Regional Groups and new members (and groups) are always welcome.

To join an existing group, visit the Member Network: [network.IECAonline.com/communities/regionalgroups](https://www.IECAonline.com/communities/regionalgroups)

Don't see a Regional Group in your area? Start one today! Contact Tanesha Norman, IECA's member experience manager, at Tanesha@IECAonline.com.



Seventeen members of the Connecticut Regional Group visited UConn Stamford on February 8, 2023. Members of the Connecticut Regional Group also visited the Culinary Institute of America and Marist College on March 1, 2023.

The Regional Group coordinators from New York, Long Island, and Westchester collaborated to visit the five colleges of the Pioneer Valley consortium (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and UMass Amherst) in late February.

The Austin Regional Group meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month in a virtual format. If you are a Central Texas-based IEC and are not getting the meeting information emails, contact Kendall Guess (kendall@pathtoadmissions.com).



Members of the Broward/Palm Beach Regional Group traveled to visit their newest public state university, Florida Polytechnic University, in Lakeland, Florida on March 16, 2023.

For Schools, Colleges, and Program Representatives

If you are interested in meeting with IECA members, either virtually or in person, we encourage you to reach out to our Regional Groups. You can find the full list of groups on our website:

link.IECAonline.com/regional

Initiatives

In March 2023, **Wendy Williams** (GA) participated in a Professionals with Purpose panel at her alma mater, Kennesaw State University. A tie-in with Women's History Month, the panel showcased the work of accomplished and dynamic women working in the humanities and social sciences. ▼



Betsy Pruitt (Associate, IN) has been chosen to participate in the Bank of America Institute for Women's Entrepreneurship at eCornell. This collaboration provides women entrepreneurs with the skills, knowledge, and resources to build, manage, and scale a successful business. The institute draws on the expertise of faculty from Cornell Law School, Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, Entrepreneurship at Cornell and eCornell, among others. ▲

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Follow IECA on Social Media!



Connect with IECA on LinkedIn (@IECA Independent Educational Consultants Association), Facebook (@IECA--Independent Educational Consultants Association) and Instagram (@iecaheadquarters).

Have you checked out the IECA blog lately?

Recent posts include:

- IECA Advocates for Standardizing College Financial Aid Offers
- Five Ways IECA Changed in 2022, and One Way It Didn't
- IECA Responds to Rick Singer's Sentencing

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