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independent schools
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IECA⁺

INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

February/March 2018

Calendar

March 13

Webinar: Taking the Stress Out
of Test Taking

March 21

Small Boarding School
Conference

April 4-6

LD College Tour, MN

April 9-14

Upstate New York Tour

April 10

Webinar
The Art & Science of Curating
Social Media for College
Admissions

April 15-17

SACAC Annual Conference

April 22-23

TACAC Annual Conference

April 22-25

IECA Pre-Conference Tours, TX

April 25-27

IECA Spring Conference,
Austin, TX

April 27-28

IECA Board Meeting

May 8

Webinar: Marketing and
Branding for the New(er) IEC

Welcome to Austin! Can You Hear the Music?

Are you excited about Austin, often described as everyone's favorite city in Texas? You should be! It's not only warm and sunny—boasting 300 days of sunshine a year, which most of us desperately need—it's also a fun town. With an alt-Texas vibe—blending business ingenuity, artistic inspiration, and musical culture—it lives up to its 'Keep Austin Weird' tagline.

Celebrated as the "live music capital of the world," Austin's Sixth Street boasts nearly 200 musical acts every night of the week. A perfect way to relax after a full day of learning and networking. Add that to IECA's line-up of campus tours, educational sessions, and speakers and it's just about perfect.

In keeping with Austin's creative energy, IECA is once again offering a blend of tradition and innovation. Member-only tours are taking place on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday morning: two-day college tours start in both Dallas or Houston and follow the trail through San Antonio right to the conference in Austin. That's lots of time to explore and network.

Four pre-con sessions will take place on Wednesday morning as well, offering something for everyone before the opening keynote by **Angela Maiers**, author, visionary, and disrupter. Maiers will challenge participants to make "mattering" a way of life as she shares her Choose2Matter movement and philosophy.



Because they were a hit in Washington, DC, the ACE talks are back. All conference participants will be able to hear three new speakers in brief TedTalk-like remarks, among them **Dave Crenshaw**, who has appeared in *Time* magazine, *USA Today*, and *FastCompany*. His book *The Myth of Multitasking: How "Doing It All" Gets Nothing Done* is a best-selling time management book. In addition, ACE speaker **David Holmes**

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President's Letter

Paddling Like Crazy

There is nothing permanent except change.
—Heraclitus

Hardly a day goes by without a headline announcing changes or challenges to our profession. In just the last few weeks, articles have featured stories about a dramatic drop in foreign student applications, shifting tax laws that threaten the eligibility to deduct home equity loans, and a \$33 million offer from a private donor to fund scholarships for DACA students.

College IECs are also witnessing a dramatic shift in admissions decisions this year, with what feels like more deferrals. And we are not isolated from the volatile political and social environment that affects everything: a rise in sexual assaults on campuses, an increase in anxiety and anxiety-related disorders among

teens and young adults, and changes in 529 plans that will now allow funds to be used for religious schools and homeschooling.

IEC practices are faced with more and new types of competition. A more-corporate model is being adopted by groups of IECs. In my area, several unaffiliated IECs have opened practices, and anecdotally, I hear the same is happening elsewhere.

All this change provides both challenges and opportunities. Keeping up is a huge responsibility and lots of work. Our families expect us to stay abreast of changes and provide counseling support amid the emotional rollercoaster of admissions decisions. Sometimes it reminds me of that image of a swan, calm and serene on top while paddling like hell below the surface.



Ann Rossbach

But although all these tasks can seem overwhelming, as IECA members we have access to information and knowledge as well as a network of professionals that can help us meet those challenges. Some of the best ways to access this knowledge is to attend our regional events and conferences (Austin should be great!) and build a cohort of colleagues. Together we can face the challenges of change.

Ann Rossbach, MAT, IECA President

IECA⁺ INSIGHTS

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only), and Twitter (@IECA).

In Focus

International and Domestic Graduate Students in STEM Fields

| Field of Study | Percent International | Number of Full-Time International Graduate Students in 2015 | Number of Full-Time Domestic Graduate Students in 2015 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| Electrical Engineering | 81% | 32,736 | 7,783 |
| Petroleum Engineering | 81% | 1,258 | 302 |
| Computer Science | 79% | 45,790 | 12,539 |
| Industrial Engineering | 75% | 7,676 | 2,539 |
| Statistics | 69% | 4,321 | 1,966 |
| Economics | 63% | 7,770 | 4,492 |
| Mechanical Engineering | 62% | 12,676 | 7,644 |
| Civil Engineering | 59% | 9,159 | 6,284 |
| Chemical Engineering | 57% | 5,001 | 3,834 |
| Pharmaceutical Sciences | 56% | 1,931 | 1,502 |
| Metallurgical/Materials Engineering | 55% | 3,723 | 3,103 |
| Agricultural Engineering | 53% | 726 | 654 |
| Agricultural Economics | 53% | 881 | 796 |

Source: National Science Foundation, Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates, NFAP calculations. U.S. students include lawful permanent residents. <http://nfap.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/The-Importance-of-International-Students.NFAP-Policy-Brief.October-20171.pdf>

Trends in Independent Schools: Here Come the Centennials

By Victoria Conway Newman, IECA (CT)



At IECA's fall conference in Washington, DC, I was the coleader of a roundtable discussion that focused on honest conversations about current trends in independent schools. We reviewed numerous national studies and polls that provided a great deal of insight into the future of independent schools, particularly in communities like Greenwich, CT. The recent acquisition of Stanwich School by Greenwich Country Day School is an example of one such national trend.

Being a data-driven person at heart, guided by psychometrics and research, I thought it would be interesting to share how we got here and what we should expect moving forward. This is a particularly important issue at this time because, as independent educational consultants (IECs), we can only assist families with choosing the best fit school for their child if we all know how to individualize this increasingly data-driven process for students and families.

At the nexus of the conversation are the millennials (those born between 1977–95) and their children, the centennials (born 1996 or later). The millennials were famously referred to by *Time* as the “me, me, me generation.” Centennials share that focus on “me,” but with the added twist of believing that it is up to them to educate themselves, earn their own money, and save for their future. So where does an independent school education fit into a family made up of both millennials and centennials? What are they missing in the public school environment? What are they prepared to pay to make up for those perceived deficits? Parents are looking closely at a school's value proposition and differentiators.

Enrollment Shifts

Statistics tell us that the high school age group will remain flat until the end of the decade when it will begin to rise modestly with enrollment varying somewhat by region. Although a high level of wealth remains concentrated in communities like Greenwich, the demand for financial aid continues to outpace supply and the middle class appears to be shrinking. Enrollment trends tell us that the millennial/centennial families value education, but they are not prepared to necessarily invest in it until the middle and high school years. As IECs we need to share with our families that independent schools offer traits that public schools cannot match, such as smaller class sizes, immediate accountability, character development, upgraded facilities, and highly qualified teachers.

This trend has placed far greater pressure on independent

schools with lower schools: they must work harder at attracting and retaining students. Simultaneously, the demand for high-quality upper schools increases yearly with more and more interested applicants not securing a spot at their top-choice day or boarding schools. It should come as no surprise that many of the independent upper schools in Fairfield and Westchester counties have acceptance rates that rival those of top-tier colleges.

So the millennial/centennial families have struck a deal. They choose the best public elementary and middle schools in their communities, spend their income on great vacations and life experiences, and then use any remaining income to keep their child at the head of the pack with tutors and specialized extracurriculars. When the time comes, the student has a compelling application for a top day or boarding school. Is this trend sustainable for independent schools? Probably not.



The families seem to have found their footing in this new economy. Now it is up to the independent schools to focus their efforts on developing communities, curriculums, and cost structures that attract and retain not just upper school students but also middle and lower school students to ensure the financial health of the school over the long term. It is interesting to note that only 30% percent of member schools in the Enrollment Management Association now have retention committees to see how they can keep

the students and families that have become a vital part of their communities.

Retention and Differentiators

There are many other important trends at independent schools across the United States that are affecting private schools. As IECs we need to share these exciting programs with prospective families. There are key signature programs that act as differentiators (service learning, global studies, makerspaces), and some schools are moving away from Advanced Placement courses. Schools are investing more in health and wellness. Heads of schools are getting younger, and all schools have enhanced security on campus. So how do these data drive schools, families, and the communities that we value and care about deeply? Although having a good education is a primary concern that millennial parents have for their children, the cost of schooling isn't as high on the list. As we continue to see an increased collaboration among schools and prospective families, exceptional word-of-mouth stories will be key in helping families make their final decisions among their school options.

Victoria Conway Newman, Greenwich Education Group, can be reached at vnewman@greenwichedgroup.com.

Austin, from page 1

will explore the resurgence of character as a factor in the admission process. Check the IECA website to find out all of those taking the stage.

With a topic torn from the headlines, this year's Masterclass "Exploding Myths of the Use of Opioids and Marijuana in the Treatment of Chronic Pain" will tackle one of the biggest problems in the United States. Drawing on the latest scientific data, **Dr. Harold C. Urschel**, Enterhealth LLC, will explore the opioid/heroin crisis, discuss the treatment of chronic pain in its context, provide examples of interventions, and offer insight on how to determine which comprehensive treatment modalities are best for a long-term recovery. 🚶



Angela Maiers, Keynote speaker

Upcoming IECA Webinars

March 13: Taking the Stress Out of Taking Tests

April 10: The Art & Science of Curating Social Media for College Admissions

May 8: Marketing and Branding for the New(er) IEC

June 12: The International Family's Concerns About University Admissions

July 10: Relieving Anxiety in College Bound Seniors

August 14: Helping Your Students with LD Become Super Testers

October 9: Procrastination! Missed Deadlines!

November 13: Sample Essays

New webinars are being added for September and December. Check the IECA website for updates.

Correction: The contact information for Paul Vespe in the December/January Insights was incorrect. His email is paul.vespe@psvlearning.com.

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Check Out the Austin Pre-Conference Workshops!

Wednesday, April 25 | All sessions 8:30–11:30 a.m.

Learn How to Read and Understand Psychoeducational Evaluations

For all attendees: Foundational

Learn about the tests commonly used in psychoeducational evaluations, including the WISC-V and its subtests. To broaden your understanding of learning disabilities, common diagnoses will be discussed before we examine how to interpret test scores, such as standard scores, percentiles, and grade equivalents. Case studies will be used to discuss common learning profiles. You'll leave with a better understanding of psychoeducational evaluations and what they reveal about the students with whom you work. Designed for professionals who are new to reading evaluations as well as for those who are experienced and need a refresher course.

Caryl Frankenberger, Head of The Greenwood School, IECA



Dispatches from the Trenches: Tricks of the Trade for Working With Students With LDs

For all attendees: Applied

IECs—whether they specialize in placement for students with LDs or not—are continually challenged to meet the needs of increasingly complex students. In this session, you'll explore creative and practical ideas for creating a decision tree to evaluate a student's needs, assessing college disability services, prioritizing factors in achieving a good fit, and determining whether a multistep transition plan is necessary. Each topic will include interactive exercises and provide tools to use with clients. For the novice practitioner, the presentations will provide practical strategies and provoke

consideration of the need for additional education.

For experienced practitioners, the presentations will prompt new ways of seeing the landscape of learning disabilities.

Kyle Kane, Joan Wittan,

Larry Blumenstyk, and Lauren Gaylord, IECA



Effectively Communicating Your Brand to Build Your Client Base for the New(er) IEC

For IECs: Foundational

Communicating your brand with clarity and confidence is crucial in building your business and gaining new clients, so let's be clear! In an interactive format, two experienced IECs will share effective methods to build your story, speak about your business with confidence, and ultimately secure new clients through four steps: identifying your audience and differentiating your clients and customers, knowing your product and communicating your services and what makes you unique, expressing your story by combining passion and experience to build confidence, and delivering your message in less than five minutes.

Mark Cruver, IECA, and Brooke Daly, IECA Associate

Where's the Money? Exploring Affordability Options for All Students

For IECs: Applied

The landscape of college admissions has changed dramatically. The cost of college has increased over 500% in the past 10 years. College merit scholarships have expanded as colleges compete for fewer students. Educators are squeezed in the middle between college and parents in this financial tug of war. What is our responsibility as educators when guiding families to consider affordability? This workshop explores the critical elements of college affordability planning: understanding a family's ability to pay, how family contributions are calculated, and how money is used to leverage admissions offers.

Cyndy McDonald, Carol Doherty, and Diane Cashion, IECA

For more information about the conference, including the full list of breakout sessions, and to register, go to <https://link.iecaonline.com/Conference-Info>.

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Top 3 Myths Your High School Clients Believe About Law School

By Laura Hosid, JD, IECA Associate (MD)



When I start working with new clients and we get to the “what do you want to be when you grow up” question, I’ve found that high school students often have misconceptions about both law school and about being a lawyer. Although no one needs to make a decision about a career or graduate school plans as a high school junior, it is helpful to educate students about their options. The top three beliefs I find myself challenging when the subject of law school or legal careers comes up follow.

Myth 1: I have to go to a “prestigious” college and major in political science to have a chance at attending a top-tier law school.

For law school admissions, the two most important factors by far are a student’s GPA and LSAT scores. Yes, law schools look at a student’s undergraduate institution, teacher recommendations, activities, essays, and other considerations. But the process is less holistic than many undergraduate applications, and a 3.2 GPA isn’t likely to get you into UPenn Law School, even if the GPA is from

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Yale. A student is often better off with a 3.9 from a lower-ranked university. Of course, schools do also consider a student’s major—a 3.2 in a physics major isn’t the same as a 3.2 in communications. (Written as a proud communications major!)

Harvard Law School (HLS) publishes a list on its website every year that details all the undergraduate schools represented in its incoming class. The 1L JD class at HLS in 2017–2018 included students from 182 undergraduate institutions, including the usual Ivy League schools, a small Christian University in Tennessee that I’ve never heard of, and large universities in China. The list also includes public universities from nearly every state, both state flagships and lesser-known locations. Showing that list to students often helps them understand that with law school admissions (and often with careers, but that is a separate article!), what you do in college can be more important than where you go.

Law schools are looking for students who are critical thinkers and motivated to study law. Are there lots of law students interested in politics and policy who majored in political science? Sure. But there are also law students with science or engineering backgrounds who want to practice intellectual property law. Or students with finance degrees who are interested in corporate or bankruptcy law. And plenty of students who majored in something interesting to them; learned how to write, research, and think critically; and now want to explore different possibilities in law school.

One additional related myth to clear up: a “pre-law” major—or even a “pre-law” track—is completely unnecessary. If a student is seriously interested in law school, he or she may want to investigate a college’s pre-law advising resources and placement statistics. But it isn’t like medical school. For law school purposes a student can study and major in anything they’d like, and law schools do not require applicants to study anything law related or have any legal experience before applying.

continued on page 8

Myths, from page 7

Myth 2: I hate public speaking, I don't want to deal with criminals, I don't want to work a million hours in a big law firm, so being a lawyer isn't for me.

Unless students have parents who are lawyers, most of what they know about being a lawyer often comes from television and movies. But *Law and Order* only represents a small subset of the practice areas available with a law degree. Yes, there are obviously lawyers who stand up in front of a crowded courtroom and give passionate closing arguments to the judge and jury about their client's innocence. Some lawyers prosecute and defend violent offenders, and some lawyers sleep in their offices on Wall Street. But many lawyers never see the inside of a courtroom and live balanced lives. They may be structuring corporate deals, negotiating divorce or child custody agreements, drafting legislation for Congress, reviewing documents for an upcoming trial on false advertising, or running their small-town firm out of the back of a bowling alley (anyone ever watch the tv series *Ed?*). And plenty of people with law degrees don't even practice law (myself included!). Although I certainly don't push people in the direction of law school, I do want to make sure they aren't ruling it out for the wrong reasons.

Myth 3: I'll never do well on the LSAT because of those tricky logic games, so I can't get into a "good" law school.

Good news! The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) is no longer required at a number of law schools, including top-tier institutions, such as Harvard, Columbia, and Northwestern. Recently several law schools have announced policies accepting the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) in place of an LSAT score. It remains to be seen what impact this will have on admissions, but law schools are hopeful that this will make the process more accessible.

In addition, some law schools may offer programs similar to Georgetown's Early Assurance Program, through which juniors at Georgetown University can apply for early admission to the Law Center without taking the LSAT first (ABA rules now require all students to submit standardized test scores; however, Georgetown Law will not consider them in the admissions process under this program).

We are finally beginning to see some flexibility around standardized testing in the law school admissions world, and there's reason to believe that more law schools are going to jump on the LSAT-optional bandwagon. By the time current high schoolers are ready to apply to law school, there is potential for the landscape to change dramatically.

Law school is definitely not for everyone, but as IECs working with high school students, I think our role is to educate them about all options and help them integrate their potential career and graduate school paths into their college search. 🙌

Laura Hosid, Vinik Educational Placement Services, can be reached at laura@vinikeps.com.



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Facing Deferment

By Mark Cruver, MEd, IECA (GA)



Deferment can be equally as troublesome for independent educational consultants (IECs) as it is for students. After spending countless hours and weeks advising, coaching, encouraging, and motivating students to apply to first-choice colleges and universities, we all wait with anticipation for the news. When the moment arrives for some, the rattled voice on the other end of the phone communicates

all we need to know. And then, much like our students, we wonder what went wrong.

The one undeniable truth is the increased number of deferrals. It has proven to be an extraordinary year in contrast to previous years. This year's number of deferred students has echoed through the early decision announcements. What is it about these announcements that has rattled our minds, our hearts, and even our confidence?

Looking at the Numbers

Perhaps one significant reason for an apparent increase in student deferments can be found in the numbers—they surely tell a story. As noted in *U.S. News & World Report* (Friedman 2017), acceptance rates have dropped with an overwhelming rise in applications. More



students are applying to more schools, but the number of students needed to fill an entering class changes relatively little. There are many factors, but to add fuel to the fire, colleges are placing a huge emphasis on early decisions, so much so that some are adding a second early decision window. That race, requiring the students' best foot forward, is crowded and requires a calculated approach that shines.

With that said, more students are identifying their top choice early. At Duke University for example, this year's early decision students will make up 51% of the incoming class. With a record number of early decision applicants, up 16% over last year, came a decrease in early decision admits at Duke. This created an even greater competitive environment within the pool. A similar environment was seen on many campuses throughout the country, resulting in more deferred decisions than ever before.

Revisiting the Process

Building and recommending the college list for students is a process that IECs take very seriously. Understanding the students and matching them with colleges that fit them best are priorities. But despite our best efforts, students still get deferred. Quite frankly, in most cases, there simply aren't enough spaces for fully qualified students. Given the deeply invested process by both the IEC and the student, it is important to discuss the "what if" scenario to prepare students for that Plan B.

Remember, the process we take students on is a journey and with all the best research and confident selection, college admissions offices continue to hold the keys. When the doors remain locked, we question the process and selection, and the students question themselves. We do our best; the student does his or her best; and yet, many are deferred, denied, or waitlisted. Warikoo (2017) wrote that "Harvard President Drew Faust has said that Harvard could fill its coming class twice with high school valedictorians....So looking for explanations for why you did get in, or whether some groups are favored over others, misses the broader picture of the lack of clarity on what gets anyone into elite colleges. It also ignores the unequal opportunities young Americans have in the process."

continued on page 11

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Dealing With Deferment


Evelyn Alexander (CA) (2016) recommends her students do the following if deferred or waitlisted:

- Go back to your college list and find one more reason why this college is a great match for you! They need to know that you know they are a good match.
- Identify any new information about you that has taken place since you submitted your application, such as a new leadership or volunteer role, job, activity, honor, academic award, or athletic accomplishment; anything that was forgotten or unknown; or an article or publication about you and your accomplishments.
- Reach out by email to the admissions counselor responsible for your geographic area and let him or her know about those new things and why you are still very interested in their college or university. It's also a great opportunity to ask about the possibility of an interview.

Continuing the Process

It's no secret how difficult the deferred decision is on students. They have clearly invested much of their college journey in making applications to their top choices. To receive news of deferment can be devastating. As IECs, it is our role to encourage, further inspire, and continue to speak well of the process and the journey. Depending on the school, the likelihood of admission after deferral

varies greatly, and guiding students through what is realistic can be considerably helpful.

Expectations are at an all-time high, and for those students disappointed by deferment, there's no better advice than this from MIT's assistant director of admissions, Chris Peterson (2017), who recommends that students "take a deep breath, shake it off, and go crush the rest of their college applications this cycle." 

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Keeping the Search Private: Avoiding the Pitfalls of Public Opinion

By Holly McGlennon Treat, IECA (CT)



Beginning in their children's infancy, parents find peers to be a valued source of information and encouragement. Yet one of the most valuable pieces of advice that independent educational consultants (IECs) can offer families is to keep the details of their student's school

search to themselves.

"I often joke with parents that they shouldn't go to the grocery store for the next year," said Erika Chapin, director of college counseling at Hopkins School, which serves students in grades 7–12 in New Haven, CT. In Chapin's experience, parents and students discussing college searches with peers increases stress, whether the conversation is about schools of interest or meeting application essay deadlines. "It's human to be vulnerable to feelings of comparison and judgment," Chapin said. "Limiting the discussion helps everyone stay true to the goal, which is helping each student reflect on what they want out of this next educational experience."



Finding the best fit for students is a common mantra in our field, and successful school searches inspire families to focus on the unique qualities of each candidate. With that in mind, the

continued on page 15

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and gallery talks sponsored by Skidmore's Summer Studio Art Program and the nightly readings by renowned writers of the New York State Summer Writers Institute. Skidmore's summer campus hosts many other concerts, lectures, events, and weekend activities, and just off campus is downtown Saratoga Springs' dynamic cultural and arts scene.

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experience of a friend's neighbor's cousin's child may have no relevance to the potential match between a school and a current candidate—the students being compared may have nothing in common. The parent pipeline is often a source of judgements based on only one or two stories about a school. Those stories may not be representative and the information may be outdated, points out Juliana Pecchia, director of secondary school advising at Indian Mountain School, a junior boarding and day school for pre-kindergarten through grade 9 in Lakeville, CT. "Schools are constantly evolving their programs and incorporating new trends," she said.

The exchange of anecdotal information is exacerbated in college searches. "Many parents carry opinions based on their own college years," Chapin said. "It's important to remember that those experiences are filtered through personal lenses. Colleges are always changing and given the range of options available, people can have a range of experiences within one institution."

While avoiding the court of public opinion is ideal, it is also challenging. Parents encounter each other through work, socializing, on the sidelines of kids' sporting events, and running errands about town. As with other life milestones, people enjoy bonding through shared experiences, so the topic of a school search is likely to come up. Some practical advice for families is to listen to others, but avoid offering details—particularly naming schools of interest—from their own searches. Offering specific school names can act as an invitation to others to weigh in about those schools. Sometimes parents hear completely unsolicited stories about schools on their lists. Professionals, such as IECs and school counselors, are the antidote to misinformation. The time we IECs devote to visiting schools and knowing their current offerings, as well as the time we devote to knowing each student, gives us a broader perspective to balance out anecdotal stories.

With such volume of opinions in the airwaves and on the Internet, the first-hand experience at any school or college is of greatest value. Pecchia strongly urges families to visit campuses to form their own impressions. "A school visit is the most essential experience in knowing if a school is a good fit," she said. "Sometimes students can't always articulate what they like or don't like about a school, but they always come away with a gut feeling. A parent can be a great resource in helping students sort through their feelings to identify how they feel about their experience on campus—regardless of what peers are saying."

Finding the right fit for each student is a personal process and decision. When IECs create the space for families to understand and prioritize their own knowledge and understanding of various schools, we give them the confidence to internalize and define what is right for the family and the needs of their own child. 🏡

Holly McGlennon Treat, The Bertram Group, can be reached at holly@thebertramgroup.com.



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Understanding the Indian Socio-Cultural Landscape

By Kavita Mehta, IECA Associate (Mumbai, India)



Indian students, the second-largest cohort of international students to the United States, present a tremendous opportunity for universities in the United States across all levels of education. Last year alone, Indian students contributed \$6.54 billion to the US economy. The number of Indian students in the United States rose by 12% in 2016–17, the

third year of double-digit growth, which was lower than previous years primarily because of concerns about security, changes in visa regulations, employment prospects, and an uncertain political climate (Open Doors, 2017).

For some Indians, studying abroad is about carrying on a family tradition; for others, it's about exposure to new ideas, experiencing a different way of life, or immersing themselves in the diversity and intellectual freedom offered by US institutes of higher education.

Although the prospect of studying in the United States is exciting, many Indian students and their families find the admissions process, particularly for undergraduate education, overwhelming. Vast differences in the education systems and cultural expectations

between the two countries can lead to confusion. Because the frame of reference for Indian families is so different, there are often mistakes in interpreting the process—whether in the understanding of the US academic environment, planning and timing of standardized tests, subject selection, or required documentation.

Understanding the key factors that influence Indian families' frame of reference is useful whether you are an independent educational consultant (IEC) or an admissions representative for a US university.



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The education system in India is evolving. The local boards of education in India—HSC, CBSE, CISCE—are changing, but they still largely emphasize fact-based learning in which rote memorization is the key to success and students are evaluated on their ability to secure high grades. In the last 10–15 years, schools across the country have also started offering a range of international curricula—A-Levels, AP, IBDP—to give students a greater opportunity for holistic and research-based learning.

According to Shraddha Prasad, former assistant director of orientation for the University of Virginia and now a counselor at D Y Patil International School, Mumbai, “Admissions officers and colleges in the US apply a holistic approach and take a 360-degree view of an applicant’s potential for learning. This sits at odds with the culture of learning in India and its obsession with high scores.”

Admissions to colleges in India are decided solely on the “marks” achieved by a student in the grade 12 examinations. High minimum cut offs skew the selection process, leaving aspiring students with few quality domestic alternatives. To manage the pressure, many

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students drop extracurricular activities after grade 8 to prepare for the mandatory board examinations in grades 10 and 12. Finally, students are required to commit to a “stream” and major (of sorts) while in high school, thereby limiting their exposure to a wider range of subjects and reinforcing a narrow pattern of learning.

Higher Education Is a Family Decision

In Indian culture, life decisions—marriage partner, raising children, religious practices, buying a house—are not solely in the hands of an individual; they are influenced by ethnic or religious communities, extended family (grandparents, aunts, or uncles), or even the close-knit family group. Higher education choices also fall under this realm of influence, with family members and friends weighing in with a multitude of opinions. Some students are overwhelmed by the pressure of adhering to familial expectations regarding choice of school or major and miss out on options that may better suit their interests and goals. The problem is often exacerbated by a lack of awareness about opportunities outside the group’s collective knowledge.

Brand Names and Rankings Matter

Many families choose universities based on the schools that friends and peers in their social circle have attended. Cost concerns play

into the decision to look at rankings or top names. Studying abroad is a huge financial investment. The cost of education at one of India’s leading institutions, like the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), is approximately US\$6,000 for four years! Compare that to the cost of studying in the US, where the cost for an international student can go upwards from US\$35,000 per year, regardless of the quality or perceived reputation of the institution. A degree from a highly ranked, competitive university tends to be valued more because experience has shown it is recognized in India and can therefore yield improved career or salary prospects.

Also, in a country fraught with corruption and inadequate government oversight, parents, who will incur huge expenses and even debt to send their child abroad, refuse to consider anything that isn’t near the top of a list. In an attempt to attend the best institutions, students sometimes blindly push themselves to gain admission to what they perceive to be “the right college” or obsess with the Ivy League with little consideration for personal fit.

Economic Liberalization Has Led to Prosperity and Soaring Aspirations

The Indian economy has grown considerably in the 26 years after sweeping economic reforms were enacted. That growth has resulted in rising incomes, an expanding middle class, and a desire to invest in education. India’s transformation from an agricultural to



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a service-based economy has put the spotlight on developing talent and a greater appreciation of global education. The availability of bank loans and fewer regulatory restrictions has made it easier for families to secure foreign exchange to pay fees and other expenses.

Six Things to Keep in Mind When Advising Indian Families

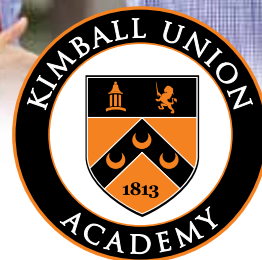
1. Offer a specific definition of holistic admissions and be explicit about how admissions decisions are made using a variety of factors.
2. Differentiate campuses by offering details. Understand that “small town” means something very different in India, where small towns literally are villages with no running water and only two or three hours of electricity a day and where the closest store is a five-kilometer walk. Explain that campus life is far reaching and ranging. Just because you are in a small town in the US, it doesn’t mean that you will not have access to world-class theater, sports, food, and other amenities.
3. Anticipate questions about safety on campus as well as in the neighboring towns and cities. Also, expect questions about immigration and the ability to work after graduation because that impacts the choice of program and destination.
4. Talk about other Indian students who are attending or have recently graduated from a particular institution, as well as more-senior alumni who have experienced career success. Prospective students love the opportunity to speak with current students to get a more realistic picture of life on campus, costs, classes, and the overall student experience.
5. Avoid focusing on sports or facilities because they do not translate into the Indian context. Students are not exposed to American football or baseball. In addition, most Indian students do not have the facilities or opportunities to play at the competitive level that colleges in the United States require.
6. Emphasize the importance of *fit* while working with students on their college choices. Spend time outlining other factors, such as university and class size, location, urban vs. rural campuses, and the overall student experience so they have a better idea of what to expect.

There are talented, driven students in India who are looking for academic challenges and want to develop skills and knowledge for their personal growth and to make a difference in their communities. The US paradigm of holistic admissions is one that most Indian families struggle to truly comprehend. It is imperative to understand these differences to counsel them effectively. 🚶

Reference

Open Doors. 2017. *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Institute of International Education. <https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors>.

Kavita Mehta, The Red Pen, can be reached at kavita.mehta@theredpen.in.



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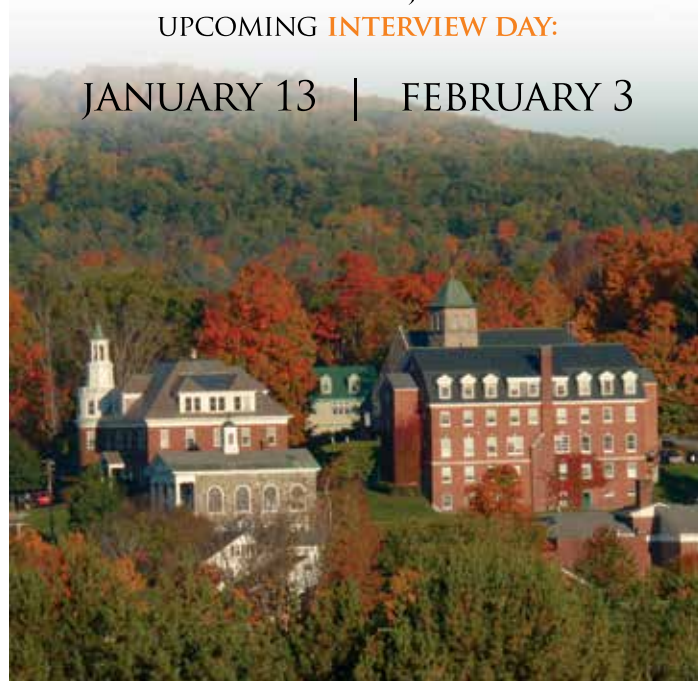
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Graduate School Students With Learning and Mental Health Needs

By Michelle Grappo, EdM, NCSP, IECA (CO)



Although independent educational consultants (IECs) have many conversations at the high school and college levels about students with mental health needs and learning differences, this topic is rarely addressed at the graduate

school level. It's often expected that students at that age and academic position are equipped to navigate and advocate for themselves. Still, many students will benefit from and will likely be open to advising around these needs. Here are five items to consider when working with graduate school clients.

Understand students' needs. Don't be afraid to gently ask questions within a student-centered context, e.g., "What do you need to be successful and how can I help?" During your intake interview, include screening questions about learning style and histories of accommodations received for learning disabilities. You might also ask questions about lifestyle or wellness factors that they would like to have considered in the graduate school process.



You can further probe those questions in initial conversations. If it's available, review any psychoeducational testing or other documentation.

Factor in strengths. Most students with learning differences or other unique circumstances can—and likely do—expect to work harder than their peers. They are used to that. By the time they reach graduate school, they are likely both self-aware and highly motivated. Help students think about their strengths and weaknesses holistically, factoring in that work ethic, self-knowledge, and tenacity can go a long way toward compensating for weaknesses.

Encourage self-advocacy and creativity. Graduate students are typically well-positioned to think maturely about how to get their needs met and are willing to do things differently than their peers. They should start with the student support services office on their campus to review their eligibility for accommodations, such as extended time or note-taking. Students also have other support options available; for example, they can consider a reduced course load the first semester. For a student with learning differences, that will afford time to calibrate study skills, which is particularly helpful when entering academic life after a hiatus. For the student in recovery (e.g., from drug or alcohol abuse), a reduced course load could allow time for settling into a new recovery community—e.g., finding meetings (AA, NA, similar), therapy, or other vital supports.

Think holistically. Beyond school, students can make other choices about lifestyle that will set them up for success. Housing and living community can be an important factor, so students must consider which living environment would be most conducive to their success. Living close to campus is helpful if a student wishes to frequently access student support services, the library, or professors.

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Graduate Mental Health, from page 21

Other students may elect to think about the people in the living community and what could be the most supportive environment. Perhaps they wish to live in sober-living community or handpick a roommate who shares a similar lifestyle or study habits.

Harness relationships. In my experience, the happiest students are those who form communicative and genuine relationships with the school community. Although it is perhaps atypical advice for an IEC to give, it is worth telling students that they need not share their challenges with the world (unless they wish to), but getting to know professors and peers is always a good idea. Not only will it make the school experience more meaningful, but it will prove invaluable if a student needs help. With existing rapport, students will be more likely to approach a professor for assistance with an assignment or even a deadline extension. Similarly, graduate school students often form life-long friendships, which begin with social events offered by the school. Encourage students to take advantage of those activities. As academic demands heat up, students often rely heavily on one another for collaboration, especially around exam time. Forming genuine relationships will not only enrich and deepen the graduate experience but also provide important opportunities for academic and emotional support. 

Michelle Grappo, RNG Int'l Educational Consultants LLC, can be reached at michelle@rnginternational.com.

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Regional Groups

Connecticut

In 2017, the **Connecticut** Regional Group toured Quinnipiac University, Manhattanville College, Trinity College, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University, and the University of Connecticut–Stamford with more campus tours planned for 2018. In May we held a recap of the 2016–2017 admissions cycle at the Madison campus of Vista Life Innovations in their recently renovated main campus building—the old Madison train station. Several IECA members also visited Creations, the Vista art program downtown.

A big thank you to our dedicated “planning committee” of Stephanie Klein Wassink, Betsy Morgan, Grace Mulliken, Janet Rosier, Laura Seese, and Cathy Zales. We are also fortunate to have so many members who have stepped up to arrange several tours. Shout out to Mary Spiegel, Geoff Stearns, and Daria Rockholz for taking the lead and arranging three tours and to Eric Dobler for a tour in the works.



Karen Pellegrino, dean of enrollment, Fairfield University, presented to the Connecticut regional group.

Send your group news to *Insights* at Insights@IECAonline.com. As you hold events; host speakers; and visit colleges, schools, and programs, don't forget to take photos!

New Jersey

The **New Jersey** group had a wonderful lunch meeting with officers from Lycoming College.

Pictured in the first row (l to r) are President Kent Trachte, Lycoming College; Carolyn Mulligan; Nikki Bruno; Mike Konopski, vice president of enrollment, Lycoming College; and Justin Ossont, senior admissions counselor, Lycoming College. In the second row (l to r) are Julissa Germosen, Ann Rossbach, Elliot Rossbach, and Janet Loren; in the third row are Lynne Rosenfeld, Eileen Nolan, and Traey Hobson.



San Diego

The **San Diego** Regional Group celebrated the end of the year and discussed ideas for the new year at a holiday lunch at Il Fornaio in Del Mar.





Why I Belong

A Badge of Honor

By Aubrey Groves, MA, IECA Associate (TX)



As an IEC who jumped into an existing practice, joining IECA was a requirement that my mother and boss, **Deborah Groves** (TX) set before me. The value of an IECA membership soon became clear to me. Belonging to IECA has given me a credibility in the community of our profession. I wear my membership like a badge of honor because

I know that IECA holds us all to high ethical and professional standards. The resources that I have gained access to through the website, email updates, TalkList, discounts, and conferences have all been unparalleled. The greatest value for me, however, has been my ability to connect and network with other IECs and the access that we get to speak with college, boarding, and graduate admissions reps through events put on by IECA. Whenever I go on tours put on by IECA or that I was invited to by being a member of the organization, I get just as much out of talking to my colleagues on the bus as I do by chatting with students and administrators on

"Belonging to IECA has given me a credibility in the community of our profession. I wear my membership like a badge of honor because I know that IECA holds us all to high ethical and professional standards."

campuses. Such connections have led to collaborations, insights, friendships, new avenues, and inspiration! Belonging to IECA has been a great foot in the door to a world of so many other possibilities in our career field!

Aubrey Groves, Davis Groves Educational Services, can be reached at aubrey@davisgrovesedu.com

To read more Why I Belong columns, go to <https://link.iecaonline.com/why-belong>.



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In the News

Laurie Kopp Weingarten (NJ) and **Kat Cohen** (NY) were quoted in "Step Away From Your Over-Scheduled High School Student" in the *Wall Street Journal* on November 21.

Stephanie Klein Wassink (CT) was quoted in *U.S. News and World Report's* article "Learn How to Impress College Admissions Counselors" on September 13.

Jenny Buyens (MN), **Lisa Carlton** (TX), and **Belinda Wilkerson** (NC) were quoted in "This High School Senior Is Spending \$1,700 on College Applications. Is That Insane or Normal?" in *Money* on December 26.

Janet Rosier (CT) was interviewed on WTNH, Channel 8 in New Haven for "Test Optional College Admissions" on Oct. 18, 2017 and for "How Students Deferred from "Early" Applications Can Increase Their Chances at Regular Decision" on Jan. 7.

Jodi Atkin, Associate member (NY), was interviewed for the article and video interview "Should you hire a private counselor to navigate college maze?" in *Democrat & Chronicle* on December 29.

Jason Robinovitz (FL) was interviewed for "Grade inflation: A's are up but SATs are down," which aired on CBS12.com on November 13.

Steven R. Goodman (DC) and **Shereem Herndon-Brown** (GA) were quoted in "Why parents save more to send sons to colleges than they do for daughters" on CBSN online on November 9.

Kate Malczewski (MN); **Jenny Buyens** (MN); **Laurie Macgregor** (MN); and **Emily Crawford**, Associate member (MN) were interviewed for "Inspiring Confident College Choices" in the *Southwest Journal* on January 8.

IECA was specified as resource for parents in the "2018 San Diego Private School Guide," published in *San Diego Magazine* on January 17.

Lindsey Myers, Student member (CO), was profiled in "Vail Daily Bizwatch: Educational consulting firm helps with college, career prep" in the *Vail Daily* on January 15.

Heather Ricker-Gilbert (PA) was quoted in "Gap Years Gaining in Popularity" in the *Altoona Mirror* on December 27.

"6 Last Minute Things to Do Before You Submit Your Apps" featured tips from **Stephanie Klein Wassink** (CT) and **Jill Madenberg**, Associate member (NY), on *Collegecovered.com* in December.

Kat Cohen (NY) did an in-depth interview titled "Tips and Tricks for Getting Into Your Dream School" on *cheddar.com* in October.

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IECA members visited SCAD during the Professional Member Retreat in January.



IECA 2018 Summer Training Institutes

If you are a new-ish educational consultant who wants to learn more about the profession, IECA's Summer Training Institutes (STIs) are designed for you. You'll enjoy four days of intensive education that covers managing and promoting a business; working effectively with students and families; building a knowledge of the wide range of options available to students; and establishing a professional, competent, and ethical practice. An STI could launch your career.

West location:

Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA (50 miles east of LA)
Tuesday, July 10–Saturday, July 14, 2018

East location:

Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA (suburb of Philadelphia)
Tuesday, July 31–Saturday, August 4, 2018

For additional information about STI, visit www.iecaonline.com/quick-links/independent-educational-consultants/education-networking/summer-training-institute.



Introductions

Please Welcome IECA's New Professional Members

Alexandra Ellison (IL) has been an IEC for five years. Previously, she was an executive for the Hop and Mae Adams Foundation in Nevada and held consultant positions with the career and technical program at Carson High School,



counseling services at Incline High School, and the global studies program at McQueen High School. She was also the service learning coordinator for the Honors Program at the University of Nevada.

Ellison holds a BA from Northwestern University (German and business) and an MPA from the University of Nevada (public policy and administration), as well as a college counseling certificate from UCLA extension. She is a member of NACAC.

At Tedx, she presented *Preparing the Next Generation of Job Hoppers*, and she spoke about the future of jobs at Kuala Lumpur International Youth Discourse. She is a member of the Chicago Innovation Women Mentoring Co-op and a regular contributor to Medium.com on multiple topics.

As a volunteer, she is past president and youth exchange counselor at the Rotary Midtown Club, Reno, NV; cofounder of Girl Empire, an entrepreneurship conference for high school girls; an organizer for a Nevada work-based learning committee, and a member of the Douglas County Economic Vitality Committee.

Ellison enjoys running, snowboarding, traveling, reading, and exploring the great city of Chicago, where she lives with her husband and daughter.

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Specialty: C*

Marie Lucca (MA), an Associate member for 3 years, was an active volunteer for the Harvard University Admissions Office for more than 20 years before embarking on a full-time career as an IEC.



Lucca earned a BA from Harvard University, a JD from Boston University, and an MTS (with MDiv equivalent) specializing in youth and family pastoral counseling from Boston College (formerly Weston Jesuit School of Theology). She also holds two postgraduate certificates from the Boston Theological Institute, youth and young adult ministry and interfaith/ecumenism. She is a member of NEACAC and enjoys catching up with fellow IECs at several conferences each year.

An ordained minister, Lucca spent many years as a Protestant church pastor, youth minister, and adjunct professor of cultural diversity. She continues to run programs on social justice and teen identity and diversity issues for high schools, camps, and nonprofit organizations. In addition, she volunteered for seven years as a hospice chaplain and support group facilitator for terminally ill and grieving teens and adults. Each year, she advises several pro bono college counseling students who have a parent or sibling facing a serious illness or who are mourning the recent loss of a loved one.

Lucca has been married to her husband, Curt Fischer, for 28 years and is the mother of two amazing adult children.

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Sherri Maxman (NY) has been an IEC for 6 years and was an Associate member. Before becoming an IEC, she was a book publicist for 17 years, and a pastry chef and cooking instructor for 9 years.



Maxman earned a BA in American history from the University of Vermont, and holds a certificate in independent educational consulting from UC-Irvine extension. She attended IECA's 2012 Summer Training Institute and is a member of the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

In addition to her practice, she is the college counselor for NYCSALT, a nonprofit organization in NYC that brings together professional photographers and students from NYC public high schools. She has presented at the annual Transitions conference at Lynn University in Boca Raton, FL, and frequently speaks to parent groups about learning disabilities and the college application process.

Maxman and her husband live in NYC, where they raised their now-adult daughters. She loves to cook, hike, swim, read biographies of 20th century notables, and play mah-jongg.

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Alan Sheptin (NY) has been an IEC for 7 years and was an Associate member. He spent 20 years as an actuary before becoming an IEC, specializing in annuity and retirement products.



Sheptin earned a BA from the University of Pennsylvania, an MBA from Fordham University, an Associate's degree from the Society of Actuaries, and a certificate in college consulting from UCLA extension. He attended IECA's 2011 Summer Training Institute.

For more than 25 years, Sheptin was an alumnus interviewer for the University of Pennsylvania and was asked to be the secondary school chairperson for both New York City and Westchester County. He trained more than 200 volunteer Penn alumni to interview candidates and write recommendations on their behalf, which sparked his interest in independent college consulting.

Currently, Sheptin volunteers for Footsteps, an organization that helps ultra-orthodox Jews adjust to the secular world and has tutored men and women in math, preparing them for their GED, ASVAB, and GRE exams. He also provides pro bono college consulting and test prep for the Chappaqua Summer Scholarship Program.

Sheptin and his wife, Lisa, a fourth-grade teacher, have been married for 30 years. His son, 27, is a consultant for FTI, and his daughter, 23, works for McCann, an advertising agency. He and his wife love to explore New York City and are avid travelers, having been to Europe 10 times.

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The Back Page

IECA Keeps Growing!

IECA added 366 New Members in 2017

New Professional Members **81**
(74% were Associate Members)

New Associate Members **237**

New Student Members **48**

Their specialty designations are

College **84%**

School **15%**

Learning Disabilities **10%**

International **7%**

Therapeutic **4%**

They represent

34 States and 15 Countries
(35 have primary offices outside
of the United States)

