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IECA⁺

INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

December 2018/January 2019

Calendar

December 11

Webinar: A Primer on Therapeutic
Wilderness Programs

December 24–25

IECA Office Closed

January 1

IECA Office Closed

January 16–18

Professional Member Retreat—
Boca Raton, FL

January 8

Webinar: Mapping the Path to
Graduate Study

February 12

Webinar: Financial Aid at US
Boarding Schools: How Does It
Work and Who Gets It?

March 12

Webinar: How Do Test-
Optional Admission Policies
Affect Students, Colleges, and
Affordability?

Admissions Reform Brings Together IECs and Higher Education

By Jan Umphrey, IECA Editor

"If a kid goes to college, we have done our job. If a kid goes to a school where they will fit and thrive, we have done our job well."

That remark from Richard Shaw, dean of admission and financial aid at Stanford University (pictured), came toward the end of his special address

on Friday and could serve as a capstone on the entire conference. That sentiment, despite using college as the example, transcends the specialties that organize IECs. It applies to every IECA member who lives up to the commitment to find the right fit for a student whether it be a boarding school, independent school, therapeutic program, or grad school. He, like so many other admission officers, "gets" IECA and that is so important to the success and the integrity of the profession.

He believes that to create a healthier admissions environment, colleges and universities should continue their journey toward more holistic admissions, reducing what he called a "focus on unreasonable rigor" that has led to ever-



increasing stress for students and the sheer number of nonacademic activities that students—and parents—feel they must engage in. Instead, students should focus on what they love and be helped to recognize the "wonderful array" of educational options that they have. And institutions also need to change, according to Shaw. He identified two things that will help:

- Stop publishing active acceptance rates at colleges and universities
- Expose rankings as imperfect at best and misleading and counterproductive at worst.

Hiram Chodosh, president of Claremont McKenna College, shared similar thoughts with participants during his ACE talk, acknowledging the affinity

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President's Letter

Reflections as College Season Comes to a Close

Now that the rush is over and the very last applications are being submitted, I pause to reflect on this year's students and realize how fortunate I am to have the privilege of working with such diverse and talented young people. Every day is a new adventure: Will I be critiquing the portfolio that a premed student produced to illustrate her artistic side? How will a creative writer choose to reveal the incredible profits generated through her online business? How rewarding it must be for an aspiring venture capitalist to single-handedly raise enough funds to establish a summer camp for children in an underdeveloped nation! Would I be brave enough to enter a slum to tutor children in Mexico where gangs

with AK-47s guard the entrance? And what could be more charming than a serious astrophysicist who draws inspiration from a Disney princess?

I have found my passion. I look forward to going to work every day. And just as exciting as the variety of exceptional young people with whom I interact daily are the rich and specialized offerings at colleges and universities across the country and around the world. As colleges create increasingly specialized majors and build relationships with business and industry, programs and opportunities can vary widely between institutions.

I recently took part in the IECA-sponsored Big 10+ College Tour during which we



Barbara Pasalis

traversed the Midwest for five days and visited large state universities, an art college, a private university, and a small liberal arts college. *Do you want to study neuroscience? International politics? Electrical engineering? Anthropology? Transportation design?* Those majors are not the same everywhere. Requirements and curricula differ. Every college has its own value-added institutes. *Does the idea of a small business incubator connected to campus excite you? What could you do in a dedicated clean lab for undergraduate students?* Making a good match involves much more than name

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IECA⁺ INSIGHTS

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Connect with us on Facebook, IECA's blog, LinkedIn (for IECA members only), and Twitter (@IECA).

Expelled Member

Please note that on October 11, 2018, the membership of professional member Bingguang Li was revoked. IECA learned that Dr. Li was soliciting commissions for student referrals. This is a direct violation of the IECA *Principles of Good Practice* and a founding principle of IECA Membership.

In Focus

IECA's Purpose Statement

- Foster communication between IECs and others involved in the educational process.
- Encourage professional development and provide continuing education to members and related professionals.
- Represent the interests of the Association to the general public.
- Promote and monitor professional behavior of members per the *Principles of Good Practice*.
- Provide support for IECs in the practice of their profession.

Compensation

By Karen Mabie, EdS, NCSP, IECA (IL), Vice President for Ethics and Professional Practices



Many times, members contact IECA with ethics issues that are in a complex or grey area, and we work together to find the most ethical answer. If, however, IECA and the Ethics Committee ever hear about a member accepting any compensation from any school or program for a referral, that is a very simple matter: that person

can no longer be a member of our organization. The ethical core of our organization is that our members find placements in the best interest of the student and family; our goal is our student's success. There can never be any behavior that even looks like one of our members is asking for any referral compensation.

We are dependent on schools and programs to call us immediately if there is any question about any of our members. We keep the call and the ensuing investigation highly confidential. If we find the member has asked for or received any compensation for a referral, their membership is immediately revoked and announced, as you can see in this issue. If there is any question, I encourage schools or programs to call me or CEO **Mark Sklarow**.

I hope that schools, colleges, and programs understand that our relationship with them is based on trusting that we are all working in the best interest of the student at all times and that they know that when they are working with an IECA member, there are never any referral agreements. Our members are hired by families to work for them and in their best interest; we are not permitted to be compensated by any other interested schools or programs.

IECA's *Principles of Good Practice* (available at www.IECAonline.com/about), which we must sign every year as a membership requirement, make this core principle very clear: "Members neither solicit nor accept compensation from Schools/Programs for placing or attempting to place students with them. They scrupulously avoid behavior that might be construed as soliciting or accepting compensation."

Signing that agreement every year is not just an administrative task for members, it is a meaningful act that is at the core of our business.

Karen Mabie, *The School Solution*, can be reached at kmabie@theschoolsolution.com.



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he felt with IECs as they strive to find the best educational environment for their students. His depiction of their shared work as being “gourmet cooks in a short-order restaurant” seemed to resonate with the group. As he led the audience through a series of questions to promote reflection, he asked, Why do you do what you do? What are you most concerned about? What do we need to learn to solve the problems we care about?


Chodosh believes that the biggest obstacle is the inability to solve the complex problems the world faces. To address that lack, he suggests that it is necessary to double the number of students who are engaging in a meaningful higher education; eliminate the “vast inequality” in access, ability to pay, and debt; and address the rising mental and emotional illnesses among students. Claremont McKenna is engaged in several initiatives to seek more high value-low cost opportunities, democratize learning with easy access, fuse work with study and study in the workplace, and create learning labs that focus on a problem that needs to be solved collaboratively.

In the profession, ethics is always front and center and Shaw took this one on directly, acknowledging that IECA leads the profession in setting high standards. As he noted, “if it was not for IECA’s reputation and for its ethical standards, I would not be here.” 

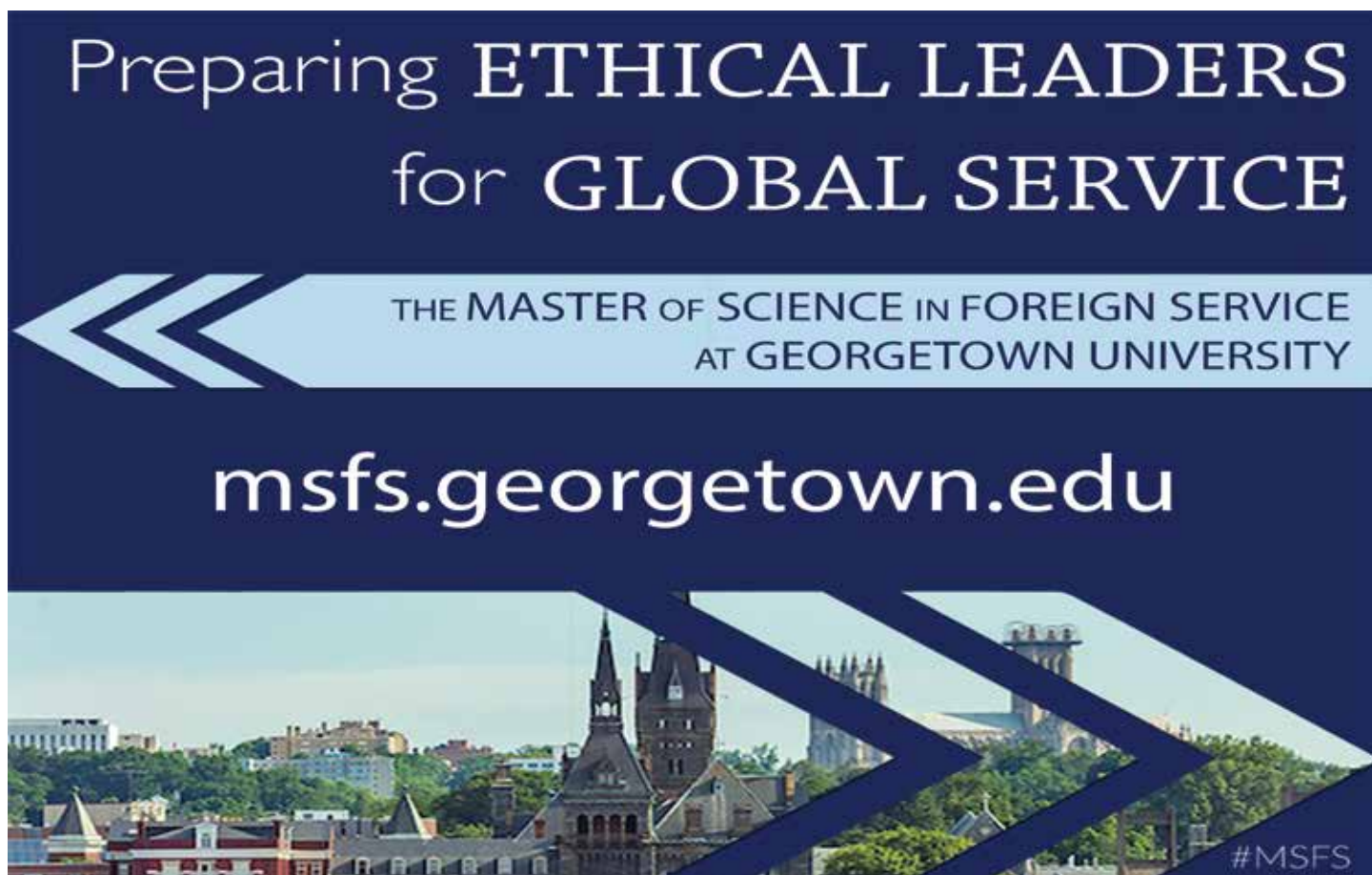
brand and reputation. Students should research specific majors at various colleges to identify the opportunities that best match their particular interests. When students find the perfect program, they joyfully and successfully navigate their four years in college with dedication and enthusiasm.

My thanks to **Marilyn O’Toole** (CA), **Joanne LaSpina** (PA), the entire College Committee, and **Laurence Moses** in the IECA office for planning this valuable and well-organized tour. The information we gained as tour participants not only about academic programs but also about extracurricular programs and campus ethos at a range of colleges will greatly benefit our students.

IECA provides a variety of educational programs to help IECs increase their knowledge of institutions so that we can better serve our students. Please take advantage of everything IECA has to offer. I have never felt more gratified than when one of my students called me when she returned home on her first college break and said, “You picked the perfect college for me. I never would have found it without your help.”



Barbara Pasalis
IECA President



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Water Cooler Event

The Schools Committee hosted their first Water Cooler Talk of the season at Miss Porter's School in Connecticut on October 10th. The group welcomed NAIS research analyst Joseph Corbett as the featured speaker. Corbett cowrote "The Enrollment Outlook" chapter for the 2018-2019 NAIS Trendbook and has been studying the effects of market demographics on enrollment in numerous cities around the country. He is the leading researcher in NAIS's study of parent behaviors. Following his presentation, time was allotted for informal conversation, allowing the 70 guests who attended more opportunity for collaboration and collegiality. The Schools Committee thanks Miss Porter's School for their unwavering support of our guest speaker and for their gracious welcome and enjoyable time together on their campus!



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Los Angeles Conference Photos



The member dinner was a great place to relax and mingle before the start of the conference.



ACE speaker Hiram Chodosh shared his common ground with IECA.



Panels offered thoughtful exchanges on important topics.



At the Thrivent event, attendees stuffed backpacks for students in Los Angeles.



A session in the round facilitates discussion.



You never know who you'll meet at an IECA party!



Conference Central was the hub of the conference.



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The School and College Fair was busy as members connected with admission reps.



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IECA Foundation Grant Recipients

The Board of Trustees of the IECA Foundation is thrilled to announce its final grant recipients of 2018, joining the other 21 organizations the Foundation has supported this year:

- Vista Life Innovations, Connecticut
- Mountain Valley Treatment Center, New Hampshire
- Glacier High School Ascent Program, Montana
- Evanston Scholars, Illinois
- Pacific Quest Foundation, Hawaii.



These outstanding organizations strive to improve the educational trajectories of students across the country. Vista Life Innovations provides individuals with disabilities the resources and services needed to achieve success, while Mountain Valley Treatment Center



helps youth struggling with anxiety disorders and OCD. Glacier High School's Ascent Program is using therapeutic methods to address the needs of carefully identified at-risk students. Evanston Scholars improves college access for ambitious first-generation and low-income students, starting with the college admissions process and continuing through college graduation. Finally, we are partnering with Pacific Quest Foundation to help the relocation process of Hawaii island school programs displaced by the current volcanic activity on the island.

We would like to thank our donors for their generous support. As a result of our donor's generosity, **we were able to grant more than \$100,000 this year to 26 outstanding organizations spanning 17 states.**

Join us in our mission by donating to the annual fund today so we can keep this incredible momentum going!

Katz Award: Congratulations Brenda!

The Irvin W. Katz Award is presented each year by the IECA Foundation. It was created to honor consultants for their volunteer work with organizations providing educational opportunities to children. Irvin Katz was a beloved IECA educational consultant who worked passionately for the good of children.







This year, the IECA Foundation is delighted to present the Katz Award to Dr. **Brenda Gerhardt** for her work with SchoolHouse Connection, a national organization working to overcome homelessness through education. Brenda is a seasoned IEC who continues to make a mark within IECA and the educational community. She has provided countless hours of advocacy as a parent surrogate to ensure that marginalized students have access to the educational system.

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IECA Big 10+ College Tour

By Joanne LaSpina, MA, CEP, IECA (PA)



What do you get when you combine 53 IECA members, 4.5 days, 4 states, 9 colleges, 50,000+ steps, and over 1,050 bus miles? An awesome college tour!

On October 1, 2018, IECA members from 20 states met up in Detroit, MI, for the start of the Big 10+ College Tour. That evening we were treated to a catered dinner and a student panel at the College for Creative Studies. We were fortunate to have a bonus look at the historic Argonaut building, where CCS has their undergraduate design-based programs and Shinola (think fine leather goods and watches) has transformed the 5th floor into their corporate headquarters and a state-of-the-art watch factory. The drive back to the hotel included a city tour, offering a glimpse of the development in downtown Detroit and views across the Riverwalk to Ontario, Canada.

The remainder of the week continued at the same fast pace set that first evening. On October 2, participants visited Ann Arbor, MI, and toured the beautiful campus of the University of Michigan before heading to East Lansing for a visit to Michigan State University, which included a trip to the campus Dairy Store for ice cream! That evening, we crossed the state line to stay in South Bend, IN, and IECA Hospitality Chair, **Cathy Zales** (CT) organized small groups for



dinner at local restaurants. The next morning, we were welcomed at the University of Notre Dame, where we attended an admissions session, took a campus tour, and had lunch in the dining commons. We then traveled further south to Purdue University, where the Boilermakers put the counselors through a round of "speed dating" to meet every academic college on campus and learn about the unique qualities of each!

continued on page 12



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Big 10, from page 11

On day four, we were warmly greeted at Indiana University–Bloomington where several faculty members and deans provided an overview of specific colleges' characteristics and admissions policies. After lunch, we headed to University of Illinois in Urbana, touring the engineering facilities at this Big Ten university. Our final day began at our hotel in Wisconsin with an early morning admissions presentation by Beloit College. We were treated to a tour of the charming campus before heading to UW–Madison to meet with admissions, tour their busy urban campus, catch views of Lake Mendota, and have lunch in the dining commons. **Zach Galin** (WI), met us as at the bus, handing out cheese curds and Badger cookies as our bus driver, John, prepared to take us to our last stop, Chicago O'Hare airport.



Planning a tour of this magnitude takes a village, starting back in Spring 2018 when IECA College Committee chair **Marilyn O'Toole** (CA) approached me to help plan a fall tour. We started by talking about the campuses we'd most like to visit that would add value to our practices, and an itinerary began to take shape. Committee members **Carolyn Gelderman** (IL) and **Louise Franklin** (WA) pitched in, as well staff members in the IECA office.

Although the first week of October is not a quiet time in the offices of IECs, we did put the bus time to good use. Many of us downloaded student essays to review during our travel time. In addition to the networking opportunities, we also put together a series of "pop-up businars" to provide some continuing education as we traveled. **Laurie Weingarten** (NJ) and I led an information session on CEP requirements and assessments, **Claudine Vainrub** (FL) discussed graduate school admissions, Marilyn O'Toole gave bullet points of the 2018 NACAC conference, several tour participants "presented" institutional wrap-ups related to specific campuses, and IECA President **Barbara Pasalis** (OH) shared her thoughts.

One participant summed up our week best, calling it "The Jackpot Tour." Stay tuned! We're already planning the next one!

Joanne LaSpina, My College Helper, can be reached at joanne@mycollegehelper.com.

Junior Schools: The Best Kept Secret of Boarding Options

By Heather Eckert, Assistant Head of School for Enrollment Management, Indian Mountain School



After sitting on the secondary school side of the admission desk for years, I admit that I was not exactly sure what awaited me when I took over the admission efforts at a boarding and day school for grades preK–9. Yes, I had worked with graduates from junior boarding schools during my time at secondary schools, and I had a strong sense

of the school communities, programs, character development, and diverse classroom and elective offerings they could provide. I was used to seeing the educational outcomes at secondary schools; in my new role, I was able to witness the transformative journey that takes place at a junior boarding school.

As I begin my third year, I have seen firsthand how profound and necessary this type of educational experience is for so many adolescents. Junior boarding schools are remarkable places where middle school students can live and learn. Quite frankly, they are the best kept secret in the boarding school—and middle school—landscape.

Experts in Middle School Education

For decades, junior boarding schools have focused on and studied the transformative—and sometimes tumultuous—

middle school years. They are experts on creating innovative, caring, close-knit residential communities where the faculty and administrators not only understand students in that age group, but are leaders in their craft. They truly “get” what it means to be a 10–15-year-old. With academics, electives, weekend activities, and leadership roles, the 24/7 learning environment enables students to embrace a growth mindset and develop independence by living away from home as a sixth through ninth grader. It’s a place where it is cool to be smart and to want to learn and a home for students who might otherwise be in a classroom where not all their peers are on the same page academically or where learning is a secondary focus. For those who are ready, it is an environment where students will find like-minded friends, committed and passionate teachers, and the opportunity to be challenged and stimulated daily in so many ways.



Personalized Academic Approach


By meeting students where they are, junior boarding schools can appropriately challenge and support middle schoolers in the right context and at a pace that is optimal for each individual student. With experienced academic support structures in place, schools can set a wide range of learners up for success. For high-achieving students, the transition is often seamless. From day one, students are met with passionate faculty who are ready to inspire and share their love of learning. A variety of programs and learning supports area available to help students who need more academic support, who may have a difficult time in other ways, or who may have felt like an “other” at their previous schools.

At my school, for example, I love that tutoring happens during study hall and in our library. Weaving academic support into daily life creates a culture where it’s cool to be tutored—or not to be. Because of that supportive environment, students often emerge with a new lease on their academic life, displaying renewed confidence and excitement for learning. Certain junior schools

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are known for specific areas of expertise or specialized offerings, so it is crucial to do a bit of research before visits. Character development is also a central part of school missions and an essential focus. Graduates should not only be ready for their next step academically but also leave with a strong moral compass and global sense of responsibility and citizenship.

Depth and Breadth of Offerings


When students arrive with distinct passions, junior boarding schools guide them to expand on those deep interests with a wide range of opportunities that are similar to what secondary schools offer. Have a student who is obsessed with coding? Basketball? Sustainability? Speech and debate? Marine biology? Wants to try squash? The list goes on. Others are looking for more variety and balance, and with so many options in one place, schools can provide access to learning opportunities in and out of the classroom that students may have never known existed (or were not possible) in their previous school settings. I had an advisee from Hawaii who could not physically get to all of her after-school activities because of transportation and logistical issues. She loved soccer, dance, engineering, and wanted to be in the rock band. She found a school that had all of that and more under one roof.

Safety and Structure Plus Independence

Striking a balance between a high level of structure (particularly compared to boarding high schools) and the chance for

students to gain independence and time-management experience, junior boarding schools are caring communities that cultivate the skills necessary for students to be ready for secondary options and beyond. With around-the-clock supervision even on the weekends, they encourage students to explore, learn, grow, and, most importantly, have fun in a community where safety is key—and there may happen to be a few faculty kids, dogs, chickens, and cats to make it really feel like home away from home.

Is Junior Boarding School the Right Next Step?

This may not come as a surprise, but the best way to determine whether a junior boarding school is right for a child is to visit campuses. Admission offices often hear that students come home inspired after an amazing summer camp experience or they watch older siblings return home from a secondary boarding school and are hungry for a similar opportunity. Sometimes younger students would benefit from repeating grade 8 or 9 before high school for a variety of reasons, or students want to test out the boarding waters for one or two years before committing to a high school program. If you have not visited a junior boarding school, don't miss out on those special school communities and add a visit to your to-do list in the weeks or months ahead. 

Heather Eckert can be reached at heather_eckert@indianmountain.org.



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Reading Deficits: What IECs Need to Know for Best Placements

By Carol Kinlan, MEd, IECA (MA) and Dana Stahl, MEd, IECA Associate (NY)

Having a solid knowledge of reading disorders within the context of their practices is an important skill set for independent educational consultants (IECs). Understanding reading disorders helps IECs discern information contained in formal evaluations, advocate for their clients, and identify appropriate school placements.



Carol Kinlan

It is essential that IECs comprehend the complexity of a reading disorder when guiding their families. Parents may offer their observations and relay what educators are reporting at school, but the role of an IEC cannot be minimized. It is through an IEC's understanding of learning issues and the professionals who can treat specific learning issues, such as language-based learning disorders (LBDs), that families can find schools where effective teaching strategies are embedded in the programs and where their children can reach their full academic potential.



Dana Stahl

academics. Their typical request: find us a school where our student will succeed and be supported! That requires an in-depth understanding of independent schools, specifically the support services provided. More importantly, the IEC needs to understand why the student is struggling and what services and supports will be most beneficial.

As IECs who work primarily with students with learning disabilities, we are aware of the signs that a student has learning issues. In too many cases, these learning issues are not caught early enough and are frequently misdiagnosed. Why? Here are a few reasons:

- Many pediatricians are not trained to screen for learning issues
- Most early elementary school teachers are not formally trained to identify children who will struggle with them
- It is hard to tease out developmental delays from actual learning issues
- Most parents are better at spotting health problems than early signs of learning difficulties.

IECs who don't have an LD background may not be able to interpret neurocognitive and academic assessments, examine school accommodations, or read detailed Individual Education

How to Identify and Support Students With Reading Disorders

Parents often seek an IEC if their child is struggling with school

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Plans. Like other areas of specialized placement (e.g., athletics), students with clear learning challenges may benefit from working with an IEC who specializes in LD. It is helpful, however, for all IECs who work with schools to be familiar with areas of concern and the “red flags” that are frequently unidentified by parents, teachers, and IECs. Without knowing exactly why the child is struggling, a successful school placement is undoubtedly more difficult.

According to a 2018 report from the National Center for Educational Statistics (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp), 13% of school-age children will be diagnosed with a learning disability and 80% of those children will have an LBLD, which is often caused by weak decoding or comprehension skills. Knowing the following major red flags in those two areas can be helpful when working with families.

Dyslexia and Eye Tracking Weaknesses

Dyslexia is often suspected when a parent comes to us with a child who is struggling to read individual or strings of words accurately or quickly. To really identify what is going on, however, IECs must inquire about the child’s difficulty in sounding out and recalling common phonemic words, the reversal of letters after the age of seven, or the inverting of letters when writing, as well as the child expressing difficulty envisioning how to spell a word because all those symptoms can indicate weaknesses in the awareness or memory for the phonemic patterns of words.

Additional questions to ask parents in obtaining a developmental history of your client may include:

- Do any close relatives have reading problems? Dyslexia is highly inheritable.
- Did they have problems with rhyming? Recalling the alphabet?
- Did they have frequent ear infections when younger?



To complicate matters, some students can decode words nicely but are unusually slow in how they read them. Slow but accurate word identification can indicate a weakness in processing of the word. That still comes under the umbrella of dyslexia. Some children struggle with both accuracy and speed of reading, which is known as double-deficit dyslexia. When that diagnosis is made, reading will indeed be laborious on all fronts and intense, longer-term remediation may be needed. The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity is an excellent early symptom resource: <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia>.

Occasionally, students can have weak or slow decoding due to attention issues or **ocular-motor (eye tracking) weakness**. The former is usually suspected when the errors are pronouns, articles, or prepositions—such as: *while*, *he*, *at*, *it*, or *the*—or if the student skips over punctuation or a line of text. The student may be rushing when reading and carelessly ignoring repetitive words.

Eye tracking weaknesses, although rare, may be suspected in children with good eyesight who complain that reading is causing headaches or “hurting their eyes.” When reading from left to right the eyes must be able to focus, work as a team, and provide a good peripheral vision field. Parents concerned about such symptoms should request a functional vision assessment test.

The Vision Therapy Center offers a helpful guide that explains that exam: www.thevisiontherapycenter.com/what-is-vision-therapy/diagnosis-functional-vision-test. It is imperative that parents and IECs understand that visual acuity is separate and distinct from developmental visual difficulties. Developmental optometrists are

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Decoding Skills, Reading Rate, and Reading Comprehension

Decoding is the practice of using various reading skills to translate written words on a page into sounds that are read aloud. When readers decode, they sound out words by pronouncing their parts and then joining parts together to form cohesive words. It may be noted that these children are unable to sound out unfamiliar words, struggle with syllabication rules, read extremely slowly, and that their reading accuracy is reduced through omissions, additions, and mispronunciation of words.

Reading rate is the speed at which a person reads a written text during a specific unit of time. It is generally calculated by the number of words read per minute, but is influenced by a number of factors, such as a reader's purpose, level of expertise, and the relative difficulty of the text. It may be noted that these children read word-by-word instead of being able to group words and phrases together in meaningful chunks; that they rarely read with expression; and that they lack confidence and are hesitant when sounding out unfamiliar words, reducing their accuracy in oral expression. Clearly, their fluency is compromised by reduced accuracy, automaticity, and intonation.

As IECs increase their understanding of specific reading issues and disorders, they will be better able to guide their families and identify school placements with support services.

Reading comprehension refers to a process that occurs when students can read, understand, and interpret written information. A student with reading comprehension issues struggles to make meaning out of the material that they read. It is challenging for these students to analyze the text at hand and make meaningful interpretations. It may be noted that these children can appear to read well but do not appear to grasp the meaning of what they read. Their comprehension is compromised because they are not able to interpret and analyze reading material.

As IECs increase their understanding of specific reading issues and disorders, they will be better able to guide their families and identify school placements with support services. We welcome the opportunity to continue the dialogue on this critical topic.

Note: In Part II of this article planned for February/March Insights, we will examine specific reading tests to request and why and discuss which professionals, strategies, and programs can best help children with reading issues. 🙏

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The Third-Party Interview for International Students

By Jack Cao, IECA (Beijing)



When I visited Brooks School in North Andover almost eight years ago, the director of admissions (DA) told me that they had worked with Vericant, a Beijing-based video interview service company. All applicants from mainland China had to go through a preliminary video interview and a writing section delivered by that company before

they could set up the regular school-conducted interview because they didn't have the capacity to handle the number of applications from China.

Since then, the third-party interview (TPI) business has boomed along with the increasing applications from Chinese students in the past years. Ryan Huang, Vericant Beijing manager and a Kansas native, said that more than 85% of his company's 87 partner schools require mainland Chinese applicants to complete the Vericant video interview as part of their application.

While TPI achieved wide recognition among boarding schools, it also permeated the college applications process. More colleges, especially top-tiered colleges of both major universities and liberal arts colleges, realized that their traditional admissions system could not adequately identify the readiness of the rush of Chinese applicants. The vast increase of accepted Chinese students also had adverse effects on their campuses. Some of the Chinese students who were admitted through the routine application process struggled from the first day on campus. Their stellar scores on TOEFL, SAT, or ACT did not properly prepare those newbies for a smooth transition into the new lifestyles. Nor did tests teach them how to participate in class discussions; work with professors, advisors, or peers; raise critical questions; or present their opinions bravely and effectively. The tests also could not help them interact socially with peers from distinct backgrounds.

US colleges found it hard to pinpoint the ideal Chinese candidates just from the application materials, in which substantially altered documentations were widely submitted. Wisdom and innovation were needed to change the crux of the unhealthy Chinese student phenomenon. Two bilingual speakers who were educated in the United States and lived in China, Terry Crawford, a graduate of UVA and Michigan Law School, and Gloria Chyou, who graduated from Wellesley and Harvard, created InitialView, another TPI company, which introduced a video interview as a bridge to connect Chinese students to US colleges and strengthen their mutual understanding through the unconventional means.

Both Vericant and InitialView (see figure 1 for a comparison of their services) have had great success in China's booming study abroad service market. Their successes come from not just creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship but also their advocacy for integrity, which resonates with the value of the holistic admissions philosophy of the US schools and colleges.

How Does TPI Work?

School Level Interview

An interview promoting the mutual understanding of schools and families has been a compulsory part of the school application process; however, the overwhelming rise of overseas (particularly Chinese) applications strained boarding school admissions. TPI service has gradually been introduced into the school admission system as a filter to screen Chinese applicants and complement the insufficient HR resources that the schools were confronted with.



Those students who fail in TPI squander the school-conducted interview opportunity, which further undermines their school applications. The schools with high reputations among the Chinese families but limited ESL and HR resources use TPI most. Webb Schools in CA; Tabor Academy, Brooks School and Northfield Mt. Hermon in MA; and Saint James School in MD are examples.

The elite boarding schools, such as Exeter in NH; Andover, Middlesex, Deerfield in MA; and Lawrenceville in NJ do not use TPI to interview Chinese students apart from the other students, but some set up other benchmarks for the campus interview for international students. For example, Middlesex requires that nonnative applicants submit a TOEFL score of at least 105 before scheduling the campus tour and interview because it—like all the other elite boarding schools—does not offer ESL for nonnative students.

Schools with fewer international students or those that are interested in increasing their international population prefer to interview students by themselves because they see the direct interview as a tool to acquire a comprehensive understanding of students in addition to their written applications. Most of those schools offer a full range of ESL programs. Fountain Valley School in CO, Dublin School in NH, Dana Hall in MA, and Blue Ridge School in PA represent this cohort of schools.

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College Level Interview

College admission is much more sophisticated than that of schools. Although many colleges are just now becoming familiar with TPI, a group of selective colleges stood out years ago to endorse this newborn service after suffering from a substantive number of forged materials. Rick Clark, DA of Georgia Tech, told the *New York Times* (Li 2016), "We have definitely found examples of discrepancies between documents and application materials, as well as instances in which applicants or agents have falsified materials. The interview helps to confirm a student's English ability, as well as to really probe into both curriculum as well as extracurricular involvement and passions." His words won wide recognition among the top US colleges. In my survey of 114 selective colleges, which is available in the Peer to Peer Section on the IECA website (<https://link.iecaonline.com/peer-to-peer>), 100 colleges accept TPI delivered by InitialView or Vericant. Among the Ivies, Columbia, Cornell, and Yale are included. Currently, other selective colleges that favor TPI include Duke, Harvey Mudd, Middlebury, Northwestern, Pomona, Swarthmore, and Washington University in St. Louis. Although most TPI partner colleges are private, Georgia Tech, UVA, and UC Berkeley, flagship public universities, have already followed the trend to utilize TPI as a tool to identify their international applicants, especially the Chinese nationals.

Both Vericant and InitialView say that they can send the video interview to all schools or colleges, but it is not clear how that works at schools that do not partner with them. We also don't know whether TPIs are reviewed properly even at the partner schools/colleges, especially the big universities that deal with thousands of international applications. IECs must verify those factors on behalf of clients.

Why Is TPI Important to IECs?

Increasing international students' exposures to more colleges.

Unlike schools that include an interview in the application process, few US colleges require an admission interview. Admission to the top colleges has become extremely competitive for international students, and TPI sheds additional light on those who use it. For example, Yan Xiaoliang, a Chinese student from Chengdu, talked about his interest in electric cars in his interview, which helped him get into Georgia Tech although his SAT scores were below the average. (View the interview at <https://bit.ly/2qLGVW0>.) TPI also brings added value to international students who are applying to top private colleges, such as ND; Carnegie Mellon or NYU; or the big public universities, such as UVA, UC Berkeley, or Georgia Tech, because none of those colleges routinely offer admission interviews in their application process.

Advocating integrity in international student admissions. The fraudulent credentials that have been widely reported in the media have undermined the reputation of Chinese students. As a Beijing-based IEC working with Chinese students, I struggle from time to time with those adverse issues that might negatively impact my students' applications. For example, I received a phone call in 2013 from a Chinese freshman at Georgetown who was not my client.



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Vericant and InitialView Compared

Vericant. Vericant uses Spoken English Evaluation (SEE) for the high school application videos. SEE is originally based on the Common European Framework Reference for Language (CEFR), but it has developed to include categories and factors not considered in traditional language tests using five linguistic categories—range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, and coherence. SEE scores are marked by two experts behind the scenes without knowing the name of interviewee.

I asked many boarding school admissions offices about the SEE report because a few of my advisees did not get satisfactory scores, and almost all the schools told me they mainly look at the video interviews and writing samples rather than SEE scores. Vericant's Huang confirmed that "schools are getting familiar with the standard of SEE," so we will have to watch how use of the score evolves.


In addition, a unique Chinese dialogue section that allows students to answer one question in Chinese is included in the high school interview. The aim is to test the student's confidence and personality in a comfortable mother tongue so that schools can see an authentic student without the pressure and nervousness of using a second language.

With Vericant students can watch and compare all their interviews before choosing which one to send to each school and highlight a section of the video that they want the admission officer to watch first. The college interview's price (\$199) includes delivery service (within three working days).

InitialView: The unscripted, unedited, and unscored interview, facilitating schools' and colleges' evaluation of the applicants without the third-party influence distinguishes InitialView, which has worked hard to develop probing questions raised adaptively by experienced interviewers. Those questions bring width, depth, and rigor to the interview, measuring not just interviewees' English skills but also their personal experiences and personalities. InitialView hires former admission officers and counselors as interviewers, and each year brings an admission officer from the US to join its Beijing team as a fellow.

Students can review their interview video and redo it within 30 days if they are not satisfied. That policy applies to all levels (school/college/graduate); however, students may only provide schools with their most recent interview. A flat fee of \$220 covers the delivery of the interview to an unlimited number of schools and colleges.

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He wanted to transfer because he had failed in the rigorous curriculum. I learned that his Chinese agent “helped” him get into Georgetown to meet his parents’ plea for getting him into any of the top 20 colleges ranked by *USNWR*. They did *everything*, including forging school transcripts, having substitutes sitting TOEFL and SAT for him many times at different locations, and writing essays.

He told me that the Georgetown experience was a disaster, and he tried to hide himself every minute from the campus life because he was unprepared academically and socially. He sought my help but asked me not to tell his parents because he did not want to let them down. That student eventually transferred to a community college with success. His experience is not merely an exception among the Chinese students that now constitute over one-third of the international student population in the United States.

My experience working with struggling Chinese students illustrates the importance of advocating holistic admissions among Chinese students. From this point of view, TPI is an effective supplement for schools and colleges to better read the international applicants with diverse backgrounds and decipher the overall readiness of the applicants. I encourage my students to see TPI as a trial of their student life in the United States, through which they must learn how to survive, stand out, and accomplish. I hope to generate more in-depth discussions in the IECA community about how to use this rising TPI service to help our international clients achieve

not just their admissions expectations but also their life goals in a greater way. 🙏

Special thanks to my IECA colleagues **Laura O’Brien Gatzionis** and **Patricia O’Keefe**, Ryan Huang, Vericant, and Terry Crawford and Gloria Chyou, InitialView, who generously contributed to this article.

Reference

Li, Cao. 2016. “Chinese Students and U.S. Universities Connect Through a Third Party.” *New York Times*, January 19. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/20/world/asia/china-us-college-application.html>.

Additional Resources

Why Chinese Students Aren’t a Threat by Terry Crawford
<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Chinese-Students-Aren-t/243279>

How to Talk your Way into College
<https://www.barrons.com/articles/how-to-talk-your-way-into-college-1441677517>

The US Selective Colleges That Accept TPI by Jack Cao
<https://www.iecaonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Intl-students-interview-requirements-for-selective-US-college-admissions.pdf>

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Vericant vs InitialView

	Vericant www.vericant.com	InitialView www.initialview.com
Structure	Writing: 30 mins Interview: 10-14 mins	Writing: 20 mins Interview: 15 mins
Who	Schools/college/graduate applicants	Schools/college/graduate applicants
Interviewer	Native speakers	Native speakers
When	Monthly from August to June	Year round
Where	14 cities in China, including Hangzhou, Nanjing, Xi'an, Xiamen, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dalian, Qingdao, Wuhan, Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Chengdu, and Zhengzhou.	14 cities in China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Wuxi, Ningbo, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Chongqing, Shenyang, Wuhan, Kunming and Xian. Four international locations in Mumbai, Ulaanbaatar, Seoul and Ho Chi Minh City
Webcam interview	Yes. New via ZOOM.	Yes (interviews have been conducted with applicants from over 100 countries)
Applications per year	20,000	50,000
Repeat interviews	3 times a year at most with at least 30 days between interviews. Some partner schools only accept the most recent interview. See https://vericant.cn/partner-institutions/	No limit, but with at least 30 days between interviews. Only the most recent interview (and writing sample, if applicable) can be sent to schools.
Review before submission	No for school level interview	Yes, for all interview levels
Cost	College/graduate: \$199 (Standard)/\$349 (Deluxe) School: \$249 (Basic)/\$299 (Standard)/\$399 (Deluxe)	\$220 for all interview levels (school/college/graduate). Fee waivers are broadly available upon request.
Fee waiver	Available. Prior consultation is requested.	Available. Prior consultation is requested.
When results are available	3 business days for college/graduate interview standard package. 2 days for express service (additional \$72) 10 (Basic & Standard) or 5 (Deluxe) business days for school interview	10 working days for all categories interview. Express service for 5- or 2-day delivery available at extra cost of \$50 and \$120 respectively
Mock Interview	Pre-interview available only for high school level at \$329. Three times max a year	No
Interview report	Available for school level interview known as Spoken English Evaluation (SEE) with full score 6.0	No
How many students repeat 2+ times	N/A	Approximately 10%
Partner schools	110 HE institutions/87 schools https://vericant.cn/en/higher-education-partners/ *Please check with institutions as well	92 colleges/16 graduate schools/7 schools https://initialview.com/supporting_organizations/ *Please check with institutions as well
Statement of ethics	Yes	Yes
Professional affiliates	SAO/TABS/International ACAC	NACAC/International ACAC

Tips for International Students Seeking Graduate School in the United States

By Mande Heller Adler, MBA, IECA (FL)



International students want to attend graduate school in the United States for numerous reasons: quality of education, future employment opportunities, networking possibilities, scholarships, social recognition, and more immigration options. Most apparent, the quantity and quality of universities make studying in the

United States very desirable.

Over the years, I have seen certain repeat challenges faced by students who want to come to the United States for graduate school from other countries. Independent educational consultants (IECs) can help international students overcome some of those specific challenges.

Creating a balanced application list. Many of our international families say they want their student to go to one of the “top-ranked graduate schools.” As IECs, we know that there are many organizations that provide rankings, and the “top-ranked” grad schools aren’t the top schools for everyone. There are other rankings, such as “best graduate school for computer science” and “best graduate school for psychology,” that may be more valuable



to a student. Help your family identify “lesser known” schools that best fit the student’s major. If the family is obsessed with rankings, introduce them to other organizations’ rankings that may include schools that you know and love on their lists. Also introduce the student to schools that want international students to help diversify the college experience.

Taking the required standardized tests. Most universities require applicants whose native language is not English to submit an official TOEFL or IELTS score as part of the application process. The TOEFL and IELTS measure the ability of nonnative speakers of English to use and understand English as it’s used in a college setting. Often the only exemption for this requirement is if an international student’s native language is not English but the student earned a degree in the United States or a country like the United Kingdom, Australia, or Canada (except Quebec). Students also need to complete the GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT, or other standardized test. Each college has its own recommended minimum scores, so it’s important for IECs to check each college’s requirements.

Securing references. Reference letters play an important role in the graduate school admissions process. Whom the student chooses as a recommender as well as the content is vital. Direct your student to pick someone who knows him or her well and who can really talk about the student’s skills, experience, and potential benefit to the program. International students often feel they need to choose someone who speaks English well, but that is not the case; letters of recommendation may be translated.

Completing the application process. International students may need help gathering some of the elements needed to complete the application, such as translated versions of transcripts, letters of recommendation, and bank statements. If you ask students to send you those pieces of the application, get them translated by a certified translation company, and then send them out from the United States, you can better ensure that all parts of the application are complete.

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Writing personal statements. Most grad school applications require students to submit a personal statement. In grad school essays, it is important for students to research the department and course they're applying to, and IECs should make sure that what they write about the school is correct. Students also need to show how their own experience, success, goals, and background will help them thrive at the college as well as benefit the program. International students should not try to "Americanize" or "mainstream" their applications. Schools want diversity and the student should emphasize diversity. The goal is to stand out and to get the admission officer's attention, not to appear to be like all the other applicants. In addition, the personal statement may cause problems for nonnative English-speaking students, but IECs should be careful not to over-edit the essays so that they remain in the applicant's own voice.

As IECs, we know that there are many organizations that provide rankings, and the "top-ranked" grad schools aren't the top schools for everyone.

Getting scholarships. Searching for scholarships can be a daunting process for international students. For top students, there may be aid through fellowships and assistantships, but those aren't available to everyone and don't cover all expenses. Some countries provide assistance to students for international study. Encourage students to investigate those options but to also research them fully because some of those require students to return home upon graduation.

Meeting deadlines. About a quarter of our company's clients live internationally, and because our IECs don't meet with the student in-person, it's sometimes more difficult to get our international students to adhere to deadlines. Creating schedules and setting your own deadlines that are well ahead of the real deadlines are very beneficial in keeping students on track. It's important to emphasize to students that deadlines for applications, financial aid, scholarships, deposits, and other parts of the process are not flexible and if a student misses a deadline, that can mean a missed opportunity. Natural disasters, power outages, and other unfortunate events occur, and admission officers don't usually accept those excuses for missed deadlines either.

By helping international students navigate the graduate school admissions process, an IEC can help the student avoid frustration and secure the best opportunities to succeed. 🦋

Mandee Adler, International College Counselors, can be reached at mandee@internationalcollegecounselors.com.



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College Planning for Students with ASD and LDs: Tools to Practice Soft Skills

By Janet Price, Director of Admissions and Outreach, College Living Experience



For families of students with learning disabilities or those on the autism spectrum, the process of evaluating college readiness can be complicated. Parents of a student with an IEP or 504 Plan who is achieving good grades (with scaffolding and support); taking honors or AP classes; or perhaps scoring well on SATs or ACTs (with accommodations) may

see the end goal as a diploma and college acceptance. As education professionals, however, we know that academic ability does not equate to college readiness.

Before I joined College Living Experience, I spent nearly 10 years as an independent educational consultant (IEC) and advocate. I am also the parent of two young adults who have successfully navigated college, graduate school, and their chosen professions with accommodations for learning disabilities and physical disabilities. I know all too well that feeling of elation as a student walks across the stage, accepts their high school diploma, and gets their college acceptance letter: This is it! The struggles are behind us, and no more IEP meetings, ever!

That last part is true. But a whole new set of challenges awaits for which many students, especially those with special needs, are frequently unprepared. That becomes crystal clear when we examine the college graduation rates for students with disabilities compared with those of their nondisabled peers.

Soft Skills and Hard Facts

- About 33% of students with disabilities who enroll in a four-year college or university graduate within eight years; for those that enroll in two-year schools, the outcomes aren't much better at 41%, according to federal data (Mader and Butrymowicz 2017).
- By contrast, about 60% of students without disabilities who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a four-year institution in fall 2010 completed that degree within six years (National Center for Educational Statistics 2017).

Why? Students with disabilities encounter a paradigm shift in terms of receiving support when they get to college. The umbrella of laws providing supports changes: students move from being covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in elementary and secondary school to the Americans with Disabilities

Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in college. In a nutshell, we can say that students move from a world of *entitlement*—IDEA entitles students with disabilities to FAPE (free and appropriate public education)—to *equal access*.

The responsibility for requesting accommodations, as well as for identifying as a student with a disability, now rests on the student's shoulders. And it is less the hard academics and more the "soft" skillsets of executive function and self-advocacy that will have the biggest impact on success.



Executive Function Is More Than Academics

Fortunately, there are strategies that families can use to practice executive function and self-advocacy skills beyond academics. The earlier that students begin to practice those skills, the more comfortable and familiar they will become. If we can present this information to our students in a meaningful way—connecting it directly to things that they will need to master to be successful living on their own—we can go a long way towards establishing buy-in.

Looking at executive function as an example, beyond the academic piece of prioritizing and organizing class work and homework, what will our students need to do independently? An often-overlooked skill is the ability to wake up with an alarm and make it to class on time. I have had many conversations with parents who, in picking and choosing daily battles, have felt that this was an easy one to let go. After all, is it worth a fight every morning and ultimately being late to school? Yes, and yes. That is the skill that will be the foundation for everything else that comes next!

For parents who are unwilling to allow their students to learn experientially from planned failure, I have often suggested another strategy. Allow your child to choose a family activity of high value or motivation for the weekend and make it contingent on an early start. It is up to your child to wake up and dress independently for the activity to take place. The consequence of oversleeping won't be something that the parent isn't willing to compromise, such as being late to school or missing a test or important assignment, but hopefully it will be meaningful to the child if they are not able to do something that they had a voice in planning and really wanted to do.

Practice Self-Advocacy in Meaningful Ways


Self-advocacy is another area that will become increasingly important as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) kicks in at age 18. Even with a waiver, college professors are reluctant or unwilling to communicate with parents, and rightly so.

Self-advocacy can be defined in three parts: recognizing that you need help, asking for help appropriately, and accepting help. Students can begin to practice this skill by participating in their IEP meetings. Many parents worry that the meetings will be too long and students will lose interest. They also worry that meetings may become contentious and it isn't good for students to be exposed to parents and teachers in conflict. Both concerns are valid. A good way around those issues is to invite the student to participate at the end of the IEP meeting, once the team has come to an agreement. Review the goals and accommodations and ask your student what

they think. Do the strategies seem helpful? Are there other things they would like to see?

Parents can also model appropriate email communication between students and their teachers. Once in college, email will be a principal means of communication with professors. The more practice a student has in drafting clear, concise, and timely emails, the more successful they will be advocating for their needs going forward.

Consider All Options for Success


Soft skills are more reliable indicators of college readiness than grades for students with special needs. Although it is better to practice them early, it is never too late. Opportunities to fill in those skills deficits should never be overlooked, whether through a summer program, traditional college supports, a gap or PG year, or a postsecondary support program. 

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Janet Price can be reached at japrice@experiencecle.com.

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Help Students Find Their Strength to Beat Their Stress

By Ben Bernstein, PhD., Performance Coach



Lizzie was a junior at a competitive urban high school. She had a 4.0 GPA, was the captain of the soccer team, and had a raft of impressive extracurricular activities. But her SAT scores were sub-par. An independent educational consultant (IEC) referred Lizzie and her parents to me, a clinical psychologist specializing in coaching teens and adults

with performance issues—people who are underperforming for a variety of reasons, including test anxiety, cognitive issues, and lack of motivation.

When I met with Lizzie and her parents in my office, I asked her, “Do you know why you’re here today?” She quickly glanced at her parents and said, “My *mother* wants me to get higher SAT scores.” There was a pause, and I noticed Mom slightly shifting in her chair. Then Lizzie leaned in and shot me a zinger: “*And I don’t want to work for it.*”

Now Lizzie and her parents all leaned in, challenging me with probing looks, as if to say, “And what are you going to do about it?” My immediate, unvoiced reaction was, I have *no idea* what to do! The kid’s telling me she won’t work to get a higher SAT score. What *can* I do? Then I saw a bottle of gold glitter on the shelf next to my chair. I picked it up and shook it.

“Do you know what this is, Lizzie?” She was not amused. “Duh... It’s *glitter*.” “Oh no,” I said, a little dramatically, “this is magic dust. Take this home and right before you go to bed, sprinkle a little over your head, three times, clockwise. Do this every night until you take the SAT and maybe your scores will go up!” Lizzie started laughing. She got the joke. Her parents looked mortified. Their facial expressions spoke volumes, “Who *is* this joker? We’re paying him for *this*?”

Without further conversation, I showed them to waiting room so that Lizzie and I could talk alone. We had an animated conversation. She was smart and funny, and we had a good rapport. I gave her an assignment related to the SAT.

When she came back the next week she sat down and said, somewhat defiantly, “I didn’t do *anything* you told me to.” I wasn’t surprised. Students aren’t sure what I’m up to or if they can trust me. We had another good conversation, and I gave her another assignment. When she returned a week later, she sat down, folded her arms, and said, with a dare-me look in her eyes, “I didn’t do *anything* you told me to.” I paused and smiled. “You know, Lizzie,” I said, compassionately, “You’re a great kid. I like you a lot. But this is the last time we’re going to meet.” A big question mark came over her face. I continued, “I don’t struggle with the

students I work with. I can’t *make* you do anything. If you don’t want to do the work why waste your time, my time, and your parents’ money?” She looked shocked. I wondered if anyone had ever “fired” her before.

At that point, I purposely shifted gears and I asked her questions about her college of choice, a small, highly regarded liberal arts school.

“Do you know what SAT scores they require?” She knew and answered immediately. I raised my eyebrow and looked at her. Her eyes opened and I could see the penny drop. At that moment she realized that getting higher SAT scores was not her mother’s goal or my goal or anyone else’s goal. Right then it became *her* goal. With that realization we moved forward and looked at what she needed to do to achieve the scores she wanted: clearing up issues of unfamiliarity with the exam, test anxiety, and low motivation. Working through those roadblocks took four months. Lizzie retook the SAT and got the scores she wanted.

What’s the lesson here? As we all know, a goal must be the student’s—not the parents’ and not yours. If you are working with a student and you find yourself thinking, “I don’t know what to do with this kid,” realize that you’ve just been caught in a trap. I call it “the induced reaction.” You’re being pulled into the family dynamic: the student doesn’t own her own goals and you’re the one who has to solve the problem. You can’t. That’s not your job. When a student says “My mother (or father), wants me to...” it’s a red flag. As the IEC, your job is to *empower the student*, not

continued on page 30




become another parent.

Goal setting is an important and necessary challenge in the college application process. It's also a thorny one. Today's students live in a culture of high stress brought on by the competitive culture, social media, and parental expectations. In this over-the-top stressful environment an all-too-common student reaction to goal setting is to sit back; fold their arms; and, in effect, say "tell me...make me."

How should you respond? First, understand that when a student adopts an "I don't care" attitude, she may well be signaling that her stress is over the top, and in effect, she's bowing out: "I can't handle this, it's my mother's problem." As the college advisor, you will do your students a service by appreciating how much stress he or she is dealing with (junior/senior year grades, extracurriculars, competition, and so on). With the student, focus on what specifically is stressful about any particular part of the process. For Lizzie it was the SAT. Through our interaction, once she owned the goal of getting a higher score, she was able to buy in to what she needed to do to reach it: she committed to learning about the test, filling in her gaps of knowledge, and practicing test items.

When you lead a student through this three-step process—owning a goal, defining the steps to reach it, and being

When you lead a student through this three-step process—owning a goal, defining the steps to reach it, and being accountable for taking each step—you are giving them a gift that that will serve them well past the application process

accountable for taking each step—you are giving them a gift that that will serve them well past the application process. It is the experience of self-empowerment. As students work with you to step out of the family nest and into college, ahead of them is a lifetime of defining and setting goals and working to achieve them. At this vital moment in the students' lives, you are providing a bridge to their future. You can't walk it for them, but you can show them how to build it. 

Ben Bernstein, PhD, is a performance psychologist in Oakland, CA, and can be reached at www.DrBPerformanceCoach.com. He is the author of Crush Your Test Anxiety (Familius 2018).

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May 14: **Why Students Must Minimize Their Digital Footprint to Maximize Success for the College Application Process**

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Regional Groups

Minnesota

The Minnesota group met with Cleveland McCray from Lehigh University in October. Local Twin Cities IECs visited Augsburg University on November 8th to hear about the CLASS Disability Resources and the Step-Up program for students in drug or alcohol recovery. Pictured are Susan Hoff, Sue Luse, Emily Crawford, Greta Van Ochten, Ryan Luse, and Gerald Downing. Kelley Johnson and Kate Neiss also attended. For more information about this group, contact Greta Van Ochten (minnesotaiecs@gmail.com).



New Jersey

The New Jersey regional group meet with Rachel Kim, assistant director of admissions, University of New Hampshire in September. Pictured are Susana Maclean, Nikki Bruno, Hildie Steiner, Carolyn Mulligan, Laurie Weingarten, Carole Kraemer, Traecy Hobson, Karime Jankauskas, and Pamela Kwartler. Amy Hallock, and Lynne Rosenfeld also attended. In October, a lunch was held with Meredith Brull, assistant director for regional recruitment, Ithaca College. For more information about this group, contact Carolyn Muller at (insidersnetwork@comcast.com).



Raleigh

Joyce Hall, associate director of admission, from Knox College, a CTCL school, hosted the Raleigh group to an informative lunch meeting. Pictured are Rhonda Manns; Laura Whitesel; Belinda Wilkerson; Manjiri Sethna; and Joyce Hall, associate director of admission, Knox College. For more information about this group, contact Manjiri Sethna (bewisec@gmail.com).



Northeast Florida

The northeast Florida and southern Georgia regional group met with admissions professionals from Lenoir-Rhyne college on October 12th. Members and guests pictured are Amy Sack; Darla Neal; Cynthia Chomiak; Tino Schuler; Bradleigh Uthe, Lenoir-Rhyne; and Alice Trainer, Lenoir-Rhyne. For more information about this group, contact Cynthia Chomiak. (educateddecisions@gmail.com).



Beijing

The Beijing group met with representatives from Gettysburg College and Goucher College in September. For more information about this group, contact Wanning Ding (wanningding.beijing@gmail.com) or Hamilton Gregg (hsgregg45@gmail.com).



New England

In October, Joan Casey organized and spearheaded three counseling sessions for immigrant families in the Boston area through the Immigrant Families Institute—pictured at Tabernacle Baptist Church are Maggie Jackson (MA), Anjanita Mahadoo (MA), and Sally McGinty (MA). For more information about this group, contact Sarah McGinty (sarahemcginty@gmail.com).



San Diego

The San Diego group met with Jordan Brown, assistant dean of admission and coordinator of student-athlete recruitment, from Occidental College on October 25 to learn more about admission and programs at Oxy. For more information about this group, contact Jackie Woolley (summitcollegecounseling.org).





Author's Corner



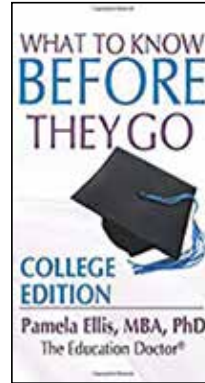
Millennial Messages: Letters From Mothers to Their Millennial (and Centennial) Daughters

(CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2017)

By Leigh Anne Spraez, IECA OH

When I was young, I read *Games Your Mother Never Taught You* by Betty Lehan

Harragan. It was invaluable to me. I want my daughter to have a guide that will be invaluable to her as she graduates and starts her career, one that has heart, insight, personal meaning, and wisdom and that is not just about corporate gamesmanship and reaching the top. So, with the help of women I respect, I wrote my own.



What to Know Before They Go

(Create Space Independent Publishing Platform 2017)

By Pamela Ellis, MBA, PhD, IECA (OH)

Parents can start to guide their teens toward college before high school even starts and develop a forward-thinking plan as early as possible

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Campus Visits

Greenwood School LD Tour

IECA members **Heidi Molback** (LA) and **Shawn Farrell**, Associate (NC) were among the IECs who visited the Greenwood School in Vermont in October during an LD consultant visit.



Big 10+ College Tour

Between October 1–5, 53 IECA members set out to visit 9 colleges in 4 states, covering more than 1,000 miles: College for Creative Studies in Detroit, MI; University of Michigan–Ann Arbor; Michigan State University; University of Notre Dame; Purdue University; Indiana University–Bloomington; University of Illinois–Urbana; Beloit College; and University of Wisconsin–Madison. (See p. 11 for more details and photos.)



Los Angeles Pre- and Post-Conference Tours

Before and after the IECA Fall Conference, 200 IECA members toured 25 campuses on 13 buses.





Photograph by Mark Bolles

Summer Pre-College Program at Skidmore College

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Skidmore College is a highly selective, independent liberal arts college known for outstanding academics, a rich co-curricular life, and its historic resort town setting. On Skidmore's lively summer campus Pre-College students not only learn together with high school peers and college students, but have the chance to meet visiting students and participants from other programs as well. They are invited to take active part in the special workshops, visiting artist lectures,

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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In the News

Mark Sklarow, IECA CEO, and **Belinda Wilkerson** (NC) were quoted in “Harvard’s Admissions Process, Once Secret, Is Unveiled in Affirmative Action Trial” in the *New York Times* on October 19.

Mandee Adler (FL) and **Jodi Atkin**, Associate, (NY) were quoted in “Why It Might Make Sense to Shell Out for Help With Those College Applications” on NBCnews.com on October 19.

Naomi Steinberg, Associate, (FL) was quoted in “Elite College Admissions Are Broken” in the *Atlantic* on October 14.

Kiersten Murphy (WA) and **Lauren Gaylord** (WA) were quoted in “Applying to College: Why There’s No Shame in Safety Schools” in the *Seattle Times* on October 5.

Eileen Restrepo, Associate (WA) and **Loren Grossman** (CA) were quoted in “Counselors From All Over Give NH Schools the Once-Over” in the *New Hampshire Union Leader* on October 13.

Steven Goodman (DC) was quoted in “Class of 2021 Records Highest Freshman Retention Rate in Seven Years” in the *GW Hatchet* on October 22.

Janet Rosier (CT) was quoted in “Maine School to Connecticut Students: We Want You!” in the *New Haven Register* on October 21.

“What College Admissions Committees Are Really Looking For” in the *Hudson Independent* on November 2 was based on the results of IECA’s 2018 survey *What Colleges Look for in High School Students*.

Initiatives



◀ In late September, **Anjanita Mahadoo**, Associate; **Allison Matlack**; **Melissa Bouzianis**; **Cathy Costa**; **Linda Katz**; **Margaret Szegvari**, Associate; **Betsy Veidenheimer**, Student; and **Liz**

Weber, all IECA members from the Boston area, helped seniors at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Lawrence with their college applications. The IECs also met pro bono with the students twice last year when they were juniors to get their college applications started.



◀ **Kate Neiss**, Associate (MN) and **Clarinda Low**, Associate, (MN) moderated the pre-fair workshop on portfolio and audition prep for NACAC’s Performing and Visual Arts College Fair at the Minneapolis Institute of Art on Oct. 9th. Participating schools were Minneapolis College of Art & Design, Berklee College of Music, Columbia College Chicago,

Webster University and University of Arizona.

Amber Gilsdorf, Associate, (OH) offered financial tips at a session at the Granville Library on September 27.

Mary Spiegel (CT) presented “Mapping Your Road to College” on October 23 at the Fairfield Main Library, a popular recurring event.

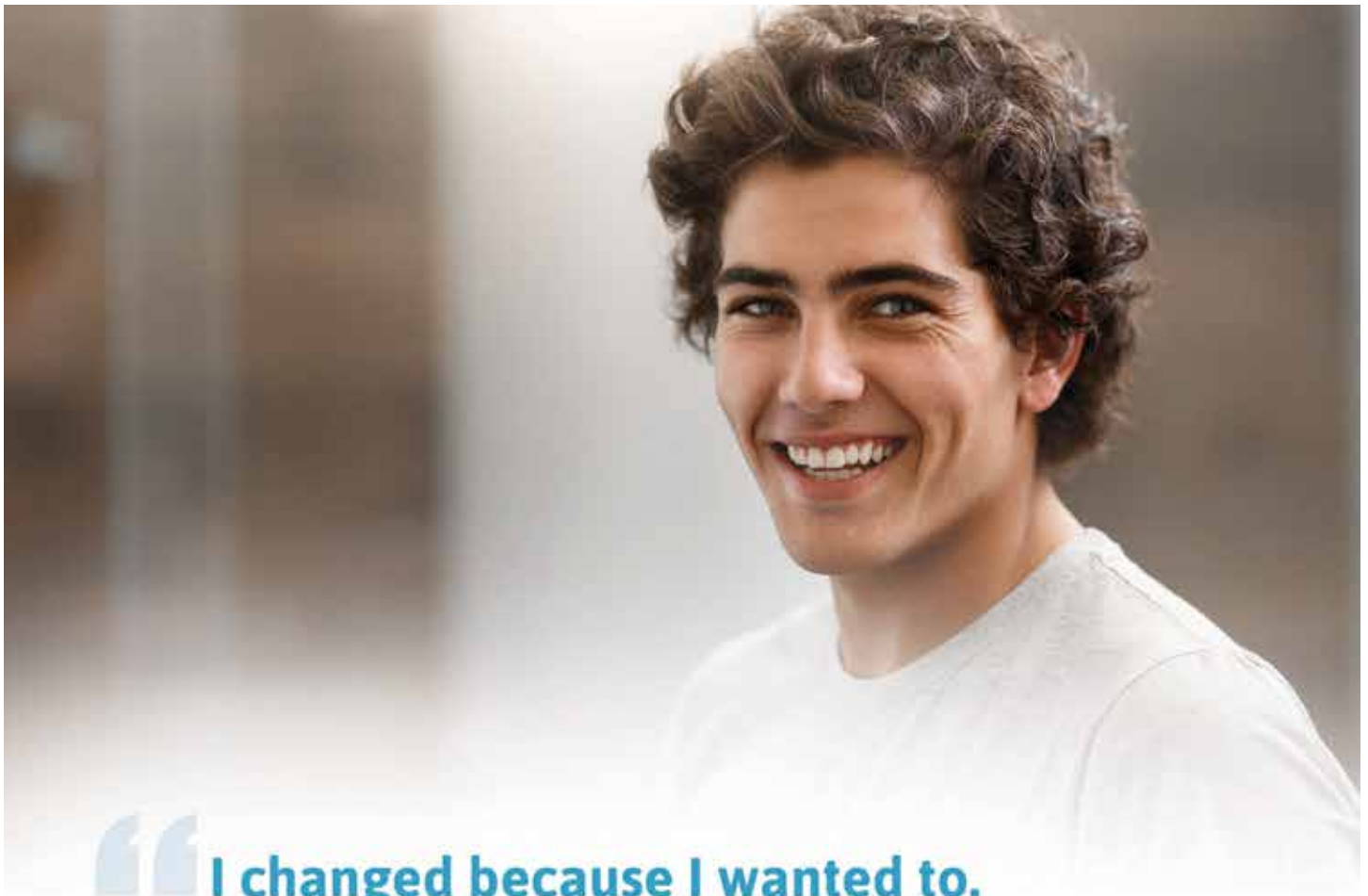


◀ **Sherri Maxman** (NY) presented at AACAP’s annual meeting in Seattle, WA, in October to inform members about how IECs help LD/ADHD and anxious college students.

Carolyn Mulligan (NJ) spoke at homecoming at the Windward School in White Plains, NY, on October 13. The topic was “The College Search Process for Students with Disabilities.”

IECs from College Consultants of Colorado participated in Denver Public Schools annual College Access for All events in October. IECA members participating were **Steve Antonoff**, **Carolyn Francis**, **Sandy Furth**, **Rebecca Grappo**, **Estelle Meskin**, and **Levia Nahary**. More than 1,200 students attended, and the IECs helped coordinate and direct 30–40 volunteers as they worked to help students complete their applications.

Jennifer Ann Aquino (Singapore) moderated panels at this year’s EduTech Asia 2018 Conference in Singapore in October. Her round table discussion was on implementing and executing a successful guidance program that meets student, parent, and school expectations.



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Introductions

Please Welcome IECA's New Professional Members

Cathy Costa (MA) has been an IEC for



7 years and was an Associate member. Previously, she worked at Boston College in graduate business admissions and in consulting and advertising.

Costa has a BS in commerce, with concentrations in finance and management information systems from the University of Virginia, and an MBA from New York University. She is a member of NACAC.

Costa worked for two years as the administrator, executive committee member, and college readiness coordinator of her local chapter of A Better Chance (ABC)—a national organization that provides educational opportunities to academically talented students of color—to support eight scholars who attend the local public high school. She also recently volunteered at the Lawrence (MA) Boys and Girls Club to advise students about their school lists, personal statements, and Common Applications. In addition, she sat on the board of directors of the Winchester Boat Club, volunteered at her four sons' schools and the local parish, managed a club soccer team, and hosted her son's crew team for the Head of the Charles.

Costa has four sons ages 17 to 26 and became interested in college consulting during her first son's search. She has completed several triathlons; enjoys biking, running, and swimming; and is a die-hard Red Sox fan. She loves to read and just finished *The Great Alone* and *Educated: A Memoir*, both of which reinforced her belief in the power of education to change lives.

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Specialty: C

Robbye Fox (MD), an Associate member



for 2 years, has been an IEC for 3 years. She holds a BS in journalism from the University of Maryland and attended IECA's 2016 Summer Training Institute.

Before becoming an IEC, Fox spent 20 years as a freelance marketing communications professional working with a variety of Washington, DC, area clients, including Marriott International, Fannie Mae, SRA International, Honeywell, and many others. Before joining IECA, she had expanded her communications consulting to help high school seniors tell their stories through their college essays, so becoming an IEC gave her the perfect opportunity to blend her support of parents with her work with teenagers.

While raising her three kids, she also became a certified parent educator through the Parent Encouragement Program (PEP) and taught parenting classes, workshops, and webinars. She has appeared on local media programs and in articles in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*.

Since 2016, Fox has worked with the National Institutes of Health to develop their college counseling program for high school STEM interns from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, and she works individually with several of those students each summer. For the past three years, she has served on the Auburn University Parent's Association Board of Directors and is currently vice president.

In her spare time, Fox enjoys paddle boarding and boating, yoga, volunteering at a nearby dog rescue, and attending college and professional sporting events.

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Joanne (Jo) Leonard (PA) has been an IEC



for 15 years. She holds a BA in English and business from Hatfield University in London, UK, and Montclair State College, NJ. Before becoming an IEC, she spent 12 years in

corporate marketing in NYC.

Leonard is the founder and chief vision officer of the R. J. Leonard Foundation Inc., which just celebrated its 10th year serving Bucks and Montgomery Counties in Pennsylvania. The foundation is designed to educate, initiate careers, and provide mentors for young adults who are aging out of the foster care system; it empowers them to succeed, free of government assistance, for the rest of their lives.

Leonard has three goats, two cats, and one significant other, Paul. She is bilingual and bicultural in English and American and travels to Europe on a regular basis. She also practices yoga, runs 5Ks, and watches her two stepsons grow into wonderful young professionals with great pride.

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Specialty: C

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Marinanne Nordhorn (FL) has been an IEC for 5 years. Previously, she spent 13 years as a professional school counselor at Winter Park (FL) High School.



Nordhorn earned BA in education and an MA in counseling with an emphasis on college student personnel from Stetson University and engaged in graduate-level studies in mental health and curriculum design at Rollins College and the University of Central Florida. She is a member of NACAC.

Nordhorn was named Orange County Counselor Association's 2012 High School Counselor of the Year and the University of Florida Outstanding Educator, College of Agricultural & Life Sciences. She is a sustaining member of the Junior League of Greater Orlando and held various placements during her active member years. In addition, she is a former trustee of the First United Methodist Church of Winter Park; a board member of the Methodist School for Early Education, and Lakemont Elementary School PTSA president.

Recently, Nordhorn celebrated her 40th anniversary with husband, Peter. She has three daughters, Johanna, an opera singer; Mary Charlotte, a wealth manager; and Beth, a 2018 UNC Chapel Hill graduate and current law school applicant. She reads anything she can get her hands on and loves the beach, baking, and golf.

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Specialty: C*

Laura Henry Owanesian (MA) has worked as an IEC for 4 years and was an Associate member. After teaching English in Chile postgraduation and completing school counseling



internships in public and charter schools, she spent three years each as a public school counselor in Charlotte, NC, and as a college counselor at a Catholic high school in Huntersville, NC.

Owanesian received her bachelor's degree in psychology and Spanish from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her master's degree in professional school counseling from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She is a member of NACAC and SACAC.

As a paid consultant for Circle de Luz, a Charlotte-based nonprofit that provides extensive mentoring for a small cohort of young Latina women, Owanesian coordinates Adelante, their college and career pathways program for their grades 10, 11, and 12 cohorts. As a volunteer, she presents annually for Young Elites, a mentoring organization for young women, and offered a scholarship for one of their members in 2017. She also presents at youth groups and neighborhoods organizations on a pro-bono basis.

Owanesian was recently married to Matt. In her free time, she enjoys practicing yoga, cooking, and traveling.

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Specialty: C*

Katherine Stievater (MA) has been an IEC for 3 years. Before raising a family, she was a retail buyer with Saks Fifth Avenue in New York City and for a department store in Detroit, MI.



She received a BA from Georgetown University.

Stievater is a member of the advisory board of the Gap Year Association; a member of Pepperlane, a national networking organization for female entrepreneurs; and a member of the alumni admissions program of Georgetown University. In addition, she was a panelist and speaker for the Gap Year workshop at the 2018 IECA Spring Conference, the keynote speaker for 2019 USA Gap Year Fairs, a member of the planning committee for the AEE+Gap Year Annual Conference, and has authored several articles.

Stievater founded a volunteer organization in Belmont, MA, to increase family involvement in community events and increase business for local merchants; was awarded the Belmont, MA, Rotary Club Citizen of the Year; and served on the board of directors of a community association in Kennebunkport, ME, for many years.

Born and raised in the Boston area, Stievater has also lived in the DC, Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York City areas. She and her husband, David, have four sons, one of whom completed a Gap Year before beginning college. They have an Australian labradoodle who is in more family photos than the kids!

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On the Road



▲ IECA attended the NACAC conference in Salt Lake City in September. Pictured here is **Amanda Fogler**, IECA Manager of Member Outreach & Engagement, at the IECA booth.

Mark Sklarow, IECA's CEO, was joined by several members at a September meeting of the Character Collaborative. Participating in the discussions were **Marilyn Emerson** (NY), **Nancy Griesemer** (VA), **Jeana Kawamura** (CA), **Shirley Levin** (MD), **Sally McGinty** (MA), **Emily Snyder** (VA), and **Betsy Woolf** (NY). The Character Collaborative is working to increase the value of noncognitive character traits (like grit and teamwork) in admissions. Sklarow and Levin serve on the organization's board of directors.

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Why I Belong

No Longer Alone

By Anne Holmdahl, IECA Associate (WA)



When I jumped feet first into the world of independent college consulting, I really didn't know what I was getting myself into. I'd read books, taken classes, visited colleges, and had a lot of background in the admissions world, but working with these kiddos day-in-and-day-out was a whole new experience.

So I looked around for help. First, I found my local NACAC affiliate; then I discovered a subgroup of local counselors who met quarterly. Through those organizations, I uncovered the wonderful world of cooperative, collaborative independent consulting. And the icing on the cake was finding IECA—an organization full of people like me. People who work hard, who ask questions of each other, and who make this sometimes isolating job of working with individual students into a community.

I no longer feel alone...I have my IECA colleagues—and no matter what time it is, someone, somewhere around the world, is awake and willing to share.

But I still worried about keeping up. I was on listservs and in Facebook groups and watched webinars and read articles. Then I attended my first IECA conference. I don't think I stopped grinning the entire week. From amazing college tours to information sessions that were designed for me (well, designed for people like *me*), I knew this was one of the biggest pieces of the professional development puzzle that I could find. I met amazing people who were working in the same field but doing things in a million different ways. I learned so much. I also learned that I knew a lot and was actually doing a good job, which is one of those things that is sometimes hard to gauge when you're in your little office all by yourself.

I no longer feel alone. When I have a question, find a great resource, need to vent, or just want to share a laugh, I have my IECA colleagues—and no matter what time it is, someone, somewhere around the world, is awake and willing to share. And that's why I belong to IECA.

Anne Holmdahl, *Common Sense College Counseling*, can be reached at anne@cscollegecounseling.com.

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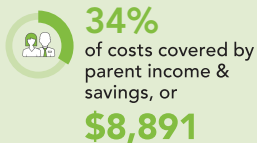
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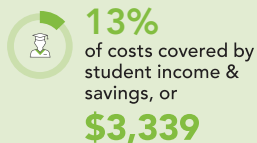
How America Pays for College 2018

A snapshot of the national study by Sallie Mae® and Ipsos

Families reached into their pockets to pay for college



and



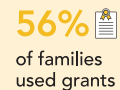
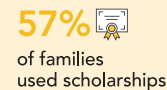
47% income & savings

In 2017 – 18,
families spent an average of
\$26,458
on college.
Income & savings covered
nearly half of that cost.

28% scholarships & grants

24% borrowing

Scholarships were the single most-used resource to pay for college



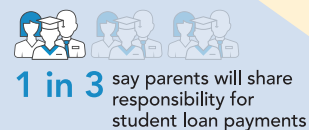
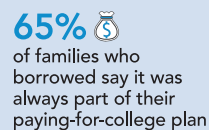
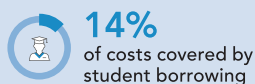
which translates to



and



More than half of families borrowed for college

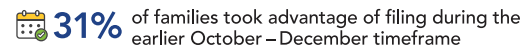


Each family's paying-for-college strategy and decision-making are different

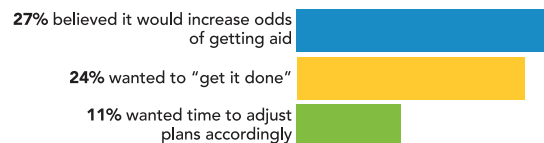


8 in 10 are confident they made the right financial
decisions for how to pay for college

75% of families filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)



Reasons for filing early



Learn more about how families pay for college at
SallieMae.com/HowAmericaPaysForCollege

Join the conversation at **#HowAmericaPays**



How America Pays for College 2018, by Sallie Mae, the nation's saving, planning, and paying for college company, and Ipsos, the world's third-largest market research company, reports the results of 1,589 online interviews conducted between July 11 and July 30, 2018, with 799 parents of 18 to 24-year-old undergraduate students, and 790 18 to 24-year-old undergraduate students.

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