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IECA⁺
TM

INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

December 2019/January 2020

Calendar

December 10

Webinar: Understanding
Neuropsychological Testing

December 25

IECA office closed

January 1

IECA office closed

January 13–15

IECA Professional Member
Retreat, Arizona

January 14

Webinar: British Boarding
Schools

February 11

Webinar: College Readiness
Coaching for Neurodiverse
Students

March 1–5

LDND College Tour

March 10

Webinar: Health Insurance 101

March 30–April 3

IECA Big 10 College Tour

What IECs Need to Know About the Mastery Transcript

By Allison Letourneau, Associate Head of School for Enrollment Management, White Mountain School



As independent school educators, we often find ourselves in a consistent state of inquiry: *are we providing our students with the most relevant and mission-driven educational experience?* Families have

entrusted the most formative years of their child's education to us, and we take seriously the responsibility to constantly hone the craft of teaching and learning. Therefore, we must ask bold questions about what we do and why we do it, with a firm understanding that the definition of *relevant* is not static in the same way that the world for which we prepare our students is in a constant state of change. Luckily, independent schools' missions serve as guiding frameworks through which we can ask big questions

and seek powerful answers as we create and recreate an experience for our students that prepares them for the opportunities and realities of the 21st century.

Educators across the country are beginning to seriously challenge the traditional grading system and the subsequent ways we capture and value students' learning. This powerful movement, inspired by the work of the Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC), has empowered schools to think carefully about what mission-driven assessment looks and feels like and what it could mean for our students when we reinvent the traditional high school transcript from a reductive



one-page summary to a dynamic and digital collection of unique skills, strengths, and interests of each student.

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Assessing Our Progress

The end of the year is an appropriate time for IECA's leaders to assess the progress we have made toward our Association goals. This year, it is particularly important because 2020 will mark the final year of the current strategic plan.

At its meeting held in conjunction with the IECA Fall Conference in Atlanta, the IECA Board of Directors evaluated progress toward the three principal elements of the strategic plan: growth and development, influence, and engagement.

Growth and Development

- The board has come a long way in transitioning from operations to governance.

- In seeking to become more strategic, we have occasionally invited thought leaders to attend our meetings.
- To better serve our growing membership, we will be proposing changes to our bylaws, specifically, adding a fourth vice president in charge of Membership and Engagement, which we believe will result in better support for our members and an increase in engagement.
- The Audit Committee has become a standing committee of the board, and we have adopted the recommendations of our auditors, thereby strengthening our financial practices and safeguarding our association.



Barbara Pasalis

- The board has appointed an ad hoc Committee for Succession Planning that has begun its work to develop a plan to ensure a smooth transition of leadership.

Influence

- We seized the opportunity of media attention provided by the Varsity Blues scandal to promote the knowledge and ethics of our members and the association in the press.
- Talking points for addressing the scandal locally were provided to members at the Chicago conference.

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IECA⁺ INSIGHTS

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3251 Old Lee Highway, Suite 510
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Phone: 703-591-4850
Fax: 703-591-4860

www.IECAonline.com
email: info@IECAonline.com

President: Barbara Pasalis

Chief Executive Officer:
Mark H. Sklarow

Deputy Executive Director:
Sue S. DePra

Director of Communications:
Sarah S. Brachman

Editor: Jan Umphrey

Design and Layout: Sarah S. Cox

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In Focus

IECA Conference Attendance in Atlanta

	2019	Compared to IECA 2012 in Atlanta
Total Registrants	1,247	+23%
IEC Attendees	418	+78%
Colleges Represented	124	+16%
Schools Represented	153	+15%
Therapeutic Programs Represented	225	+4%
Vendors	37	+54%

Upcoming IECA Member Tours

IECA Learning Disabilities College Tour

For IECA member consultants only

March 1–5 • Virginia, DC, Maryland

Don't miss this opportunity! Virginia, District of Columbia, and Maryland colleges, including a postsecondary program, will be on the agenda. More colleges to come, but here's a sneak peek: **American University, Catholic University of America, College Living Experience, George Mason University, McDaniel College, University of Maryland**

Visit Committee Organized Tours on the IECA website at link.iecaonline.com/committee-tours for details.

Registration will open in January.

IECA's Big 10 College Tour

Back by Popular Demand!

For IECA member consultants only

March 30–April 3 • Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin

IECA's College Committee has organized an encore of this popular tour from last year. Campuses include: **College for Creative Studies, University of Michigan, Michigan State University, University of Notre Dame, Purdue University, Indiana University Bloomington, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Wisconsin-Madison**

Visit Committee Organized Tours on the IECA website at link.iecaonline.com/committee-tours for details.

Registration will open in January.

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As we seek to find answers and redefine best practices, schools ought to ensure that key stakeholders—especially independent educational consultants (IECs)—have opportunities to learn about the pivots and shifts we adopt in the pursuit of inspiring the future generation of dynamic thinkers, creative problem solvers, and collaborative leaders. This article seeks to provide insight into the MTC movement and offer an example of how this work is being put into practice.

The Mastery Transcript Consortium

The Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC) is a growing network of member schools who are transforming high school with a new transcript that supports mastery learning and reflects the unique skills, strengths, and interests of each learner. In the coming years, the MTC hopes to change the way students prepare for college, career, and life.

What does it mean to be an MTC member school? At its heart, it's a commitment to engage in a national conversation about the way we value and assess learning. MTC member schools are inspired by the permission to think about the power of adopting a more holistic approach to education—one that values the unique assets of each learner. The MTC's membership is represented by a heterogeneous collection of schools (in the hundreds) connected around a homogenous conclusion: when it comes to the high school transcript, our students deserve and need more.

To be clear, although the overarching goal of the MTC is to reinvent the high school transcript and the way students prepare for college, careers, and life, current school membership does not necessarily reflect a school's imminent readiness to adopt a new transcript. We know that to create meaningful change in our schools, school leaders must be attentive to and aware of the unique needs of their institution, and for some, engaging in those conversations and interrogating traditional practices is the first step in this important movement.

Values-Driven Assessment

At my school, conversations about teaching, learning, and assessment models are at the heart of how we think about being a mission-driven institution. Ten years ago, we identified our *Essential Skills and Habits*, a collection of specific competencies that frame the way we think about the unique power of the education we provide.

In alignment with the MTC movement toward a competency and skills-based approach to assessment, we are using the current school year to pilot a competency-based assessment model. The questions we ask often begin with our mission, which says in part, "We are a school of inquiry and engagement." Our mission, like all schools' missions, is a clear statement of our values—we believe deeply in the power of inquiry as a means for achieving meaningful engagement. **[Did you find that the current assessment was not sufficient? Why? Can you give examples?]** As a school that deliberately creates time and space for students to ask and answer authentic questions, we were excited to think about new, innovative, and holistic ways to

At its heart, [a mastery transcript] is a commitment to engage in a national conversation about the way we value and assess learning. MTC member schools are inspired...to think about the power of adopting a more holistic approach to education—one that values the unique assets of each learner.

design learning experiences that can be assessed through the lens of a competency-based model, providing our teachers with the permission to design and assess compelling and relevant learning experiences.

Although we are still early in the pilot, one thing is already clear: our students are deeply appreciative of an approach that has a more wide-reaching grasp in capturing who they are, what they're passionate about, how they're growing, and where they want to go. **[How do you know this? Can you give some examples?]** They feel seen and known. What more could we ask for? 

Imagine a Transcript

The MTC model is substantively different from the traditional model of assessment that is typically organized around content-oriented courses, Carnegie units for credit, and A to F letter grades.

Current Transcript	Mastery Transcript
Flat, two-dimensional, one page	Digital, interactive
Credit for time	Credit for mastery
Single-subject	Cross-disciplinary credits possible
Grades (little or no definition)	School-defined credits with consistent metrics/rubrics
Typically limited to academic subjects	Credits can be broader; most schools include SEL/4-dimensions

Source: Mastery Transcript Consortium (<https://mastery.org/a-new-model>)

Allison Letourneau can be reached at allison.letourneau@whitemountain.org.

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President's Letter, from page 2

- A webinar on positive press interviews was presented and background information to use in talking with the press is available for our members on the IECA website to assist them in contacting and speaking with their local press.
- The Business Practices Committee has become a standing committee of the membership.
- The Association has hired a national lobbying firm to provide timely information on the status of legislation in California and other states to ensure that any legislative policies will be in line with our interests. Our primary concern is protecting the interests of our members.
- We appointed an ad hoc Governmental Relations committee and will propose a bylaw change to make it a standing committee of the board.

We invite all our members to get involved and contribute their thoughts. Please feel free to contact any member of the board to share your ideas.

Engagement

- The board is currently discussing changes to term limits and changes to years of service required to serve on the board and may propose additional bylaw changes.
- The Vice President for Committees is working to reorganize and improve the process for transitioning committee leadership.
- Tours have been expanded across the board, and the Education and Training Committee has developed Educational Intensives as another educational option for members.
- Looking ahead, we believe that Regional Groups will play a more significant role in educating members and increasing the brand recognition of IECA throughout the country.
- An additional Summer Training Institute in Asia is being considered for 2021.

Next spring, the new president and board will likely embark on a new five-year strategic plan. I am confident that the leadership of IECA, including the board, CEO **Mark Sklarow**, and the entire staff, will continue to consider and evaluate new ideas and changes to strengthen and benefit our Association and better serve our members. We invite all our members to get involved and contribute their thoughts. Please feel free to contact any member of the board to share your ideas.

Barbara Pavalis
IECA President

The Atlanta Conference: Brimming With IECA Energy



Roundtable discussions allowed attendees to gain knowledge and share expertise.



Dr. Timothy Renick's College Special Address provided a fascinating glimpse into GA State's successful effort to improve graduation rates using access and data analytics.



Conference Central provided a relaxed venue for connecting with colleagues.



Getting into the college spirit at the Networking Reception tailgate party.



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What's an IECA Conference without a delicious and collegial Member Dinner?



With more than 70 educational sessions to choose from, attendees kept busy throughout the week.

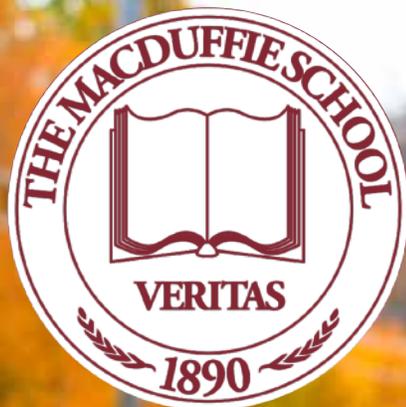


ACE Talks speaker Dr. David Thomas, President, Morehouse College.

The info swap connected therapeutic admission reps with IECs.



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Covering Therapeutic Treatment Costs

By Lisa Vella, MEd, IECA (NY)

One of the many struggles parents will face when their child requires immediate placement in a therapeutic program is how to afford the process. This is a very stressful and overwhelming time for parents because residential treatment is very expensive. Some parents may have money set aside that can be used for treatment, but if they don't, parents will do anything they can to make it happen. There are various ways to fund a residential program, but it is strongly recommended that parents seek guidance from an accountant or a certified financial planner to make conscientious decisions that will not be harmful in the future.

Finding the Money

The immediate and urgent need to make the decision on how to afford treatment for your child can be terrifying. Although a certified financial planner may recommend against borrowing from a 401K because there are no loans for retirement and it's impossible to make up the time money has

grown, parents often have no choice but to borrow from those accounts to save their child's life.

Families have also used money from their child's 529 College Savings Plan, because they assume that their child will not go to college if they don't get them the immediate help they need. In some extreme instances, families have borrowed money from friends, taken out a home equity loan, or sold their home and used the equity to pay for treatment.

If the child has an IEP, parents may be able to pursue funding through their school district. It is always strongly recommended that they consult with a special education attorney to discuss their case because school districts vary from state to state and district to district. Independent educational consultants (IECs) can help a family seeking scholarship funds. A few nonprofits, such as Saving Teens and The Sky's the Limit Fund, offer assistance and some programs may provide scholarship funding as well.



Lisa Vella, Vella Consulting Inc., can be reached at lisa@alternativesuccess.com.

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Using Insurance

Unfortunately, insurance companies do not cover all aspects of treatment. There are thousands of insurance plans, which vary from state to state, and there is never any guarantee of coverage. Attempting to seek reimbursement from insurance companies is extremely time consuming and exhausting. Therapeutic programs may not meet the insurance plan's requirements for coverage, and the specific program recommended and appropriate for their child may not meet the criteria for full or partial reimbursement. Some may not reimburse at all.

Despite those obstacles, many parents still choose to pursue reimbursement through their insurance company to get whatever they can. When pursuing reimbursement, the first step in determining benefits is to call the insurance company to verify benefits. Insurance companies will determine coverage based on medical necessity, which means that there is evidence that the child could not function without that level of care.

The specified level of care will vary from plan to plan as will how many days and the reimbursement rate. In most cases, the child must be going through significant behaviors that are presently unsafe or create immense difficulty in basic daily functioning. Once the child begins to display stability or a significant decrease in unsafe behaviors, an insurance company will often deny coverage, even when the child continues to struggle. It is

important to note that insurance companies hardly ever cover long-term residential care even when the program is the right fit and long-term treatment is clinically recommended.

There are outside companies, insurance advocates, that families can hire to handle the verification of benefits and billing needs. Those advocates have special skills and training to understand exactly what insurance companies are looking for to determine coverage. They are experts who are skilled in knowing all the details of every insurance plan and can access records and communicate with the program regarding the status and progress of the child to manage the claim. They provide clients with quality customer service and support and are helpful to alleviate the stress of pursuing reimbursement and feeling overwhelmed. In the end, however, the decision to pursue insurance coverage is completely up to the parent.

Staying Hopeful

The challenges that present when a child requires treatment in a program can create a lot of fear and anxiety, so it's important for IECs to discuss all the possible options available to families in need of funding. Although it may seem like there's no hope, there are always possible ways to fund treatment. Where there's a will there's a way, and we've all experienced the power of hope, trust, and perseverance. In the words of an unknown author, "Don't lose hope. When the sun goes down, the stars come out." 



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Stay Sane: Manage the Gap Between Your Plan and What Clients Do

By Rhiannon Schade, MEd, IECA (NJ)

It's October 26, 2013. Three of my seniors are dragging their feet on their supplemental essays for early action applications as well as the written work needed for their regular decision colleges. Another keeps changing the list: her application requirements are starting to feel like a moving target. Yet another's father has done professional writing in a past life, so he feels the need to transform his son's essay into the rambling reflections of a 51-year-old attorney rather than those of a 17-year-old boy. After a long afternoon of meetings that weren't as productive as I'd hoped, I grab my laptop and jump in the car, only to take it right back out again at home. Nine more essays need feedback tonight. *This is fall*, I sigh to myself. But what I didn't know then is that it doesn't have to be that stressful.

Fall often makes clear the wide chasm between what we've so thoughtfully advised and what families (sometimes) choose to do with that information, between the *ideal* process and how it plays out in *reality*. Must the height of application

season become the time during which it falls solely on us to close that gap, to right the ship for those who might not even want to sail or who seem to be doing so in an entirely different ocean? Fall is always a scramble, to some degree, to be clear. But there are proactive steps we can take to make it less of one, and more importantly, to make this process smoother for the families we work with while spending less energy than ever before. If that sounds like sorcery, read on.

What Does Success Look Like?

When you begin working with a family, ask the student and the family what success looks like to them. Ask sincerely and don't immediately dismiss goals that are at odds with your established set of values. Families hire independent educational consultants (IECs) because of asymmetrical information and the complexity of the college search and application process—they don't have the knowledge you have to perfectly articulate

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Rhiannon Schade, Collegewise, can be reached at rhiannons@collegewise.com.

what feels like a good outcome. If a family is overly focused on prestige, there are two possible routes. You can develop a rapport with them, share information, and help the student and parents see the forest through the trees: it's not where you go, it's what you do while you're there that leads to success upon graduation. Alternatively, you can share your insight and not change your client's views. That is OK. It goes without saying that if a parent is leading the charge rather than the student, it is well within your responsibility as the IEC to let the family know that things can and do work better when the student is driving the bus.

Of course, it's crucial to be honest with families about the range of outcomes that can happen and to inquire about plan B—and plan C.

It goes without saying that if a parent is leading the charge rather than the student, it is well within your responsibility as the IEC to let the family know that things can and do work better when the student is driving the bus.

Support Is not Control

Establishing boundaries is important, especially for families who hear your advice, but don't heed it. High expectations do not mean that anyone can control your day, your month, your year, your mindset. Here are some strategies for managing expectations while maintaining boundaries with high-intensity clients.

Don't match their intensity. It's difficult to avoid becoming anxious when you have a student with only one college on the list where the likelihood of admission is strong, but as long as you've communicated your concern verbally and in writing, it's not your battle to fight: the family has given you the permission to not be anxious. It's tough not to be sympathetic—or angry—when a student sends you a final draft just 24 hours before a college deadline, but if you've been communicative about that not being reasonable, it's OK not to review it.

Trust your judgment. If you have clients with aspirational lists, support them, but don't let your own judgment drift. If you have a student who decides to apply to all of the Ivy League schools, for example, you can advise against it at least twice and accept that you may not be able to (or need to) change their views, but that does not mean you have to tell that client that it is a wise move (it isn't) or validate their expectation that one of them will somehow pan out (it might not).

Follow their need, not their lead. Your families need your support; they do not need you to agree with them about every aspect of the process. The following four-step framework tends to be effective for high-touch families or those with aspirational lists.

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1. Ask your new students what success looks like for them at the outset of your work together and periodically thereafter. *Listen to the answer.*
2. Lay out the possible outcomes clearly and honestly both verbally and in writing. For families who are particularly invested in prestige over other criteria, gain consent to be honest. Share your professional opinion twice. Show them various options with different levels of riskiness.
3. Let them choose what to do. This journey belongs to the student, not to us. Support the plan they've chosen.
4. Stick to your values—and boundaries.

Don't Call Them Crazy

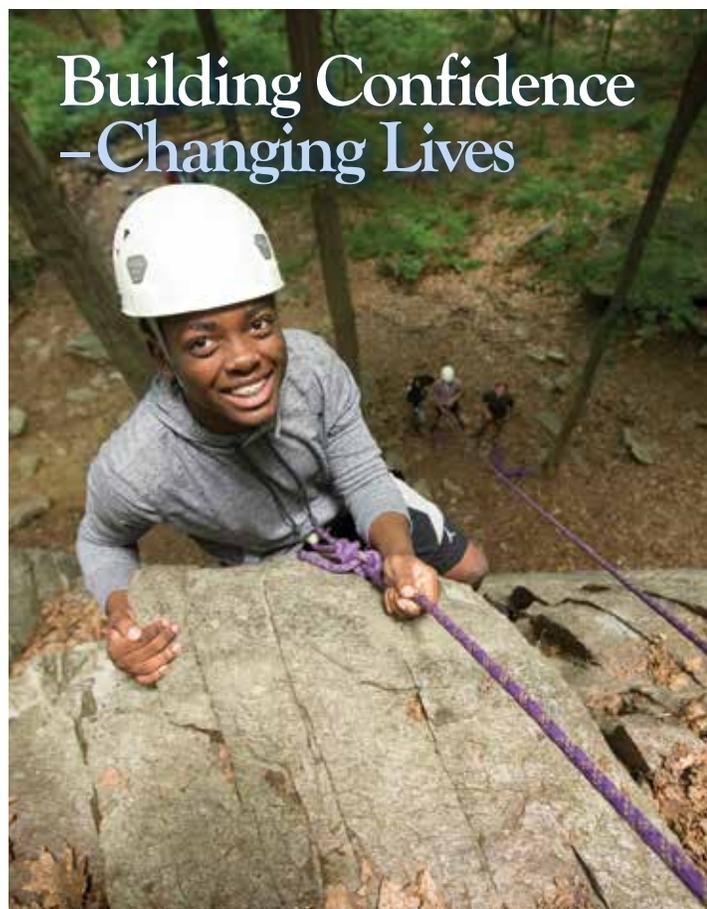
We have a saying at my practice: Don't call them crazy. Crazy is a crutch. Crazy allows us to dismiss the legitimate concerns of our clients, to let ourselves off the hook for doing the intellectual and emotional work of minimizing uncertainty in their process simply because we have issues with someone taking a different approach to it. Crazy displays our own insecurities and ego in action; it reveals our need to be right. Break your attachment with being right. You are not there to be right. (You are right, by the way, but it doesn't matter.) You are there to guide, you are there to advise, but you are not there to force insight—and you cannot force it, regardless of the number of emails, reminders, and conversations you choose to have. Students are the rightful owners of their college search and while you may know that the

ones who act on your advice end up with more options, you'll come up short if you need to evangelize.

Final Thoughts

It's taken me years to adapt my counseling style for families who think about college admissions differently than I do. It's frustrating to place prestige at the center of a student's process or see families make choices that amp up the stress factor, but it's also not my burden to bear. Families hire me for advice, not for me to force my approach or perspective on them, so I don't.

It's October 18th, 2019. Four of my seniors are lagging behind on supplemental essays that are needed for November 1st deadlines, but they're aware that October 20th is that last day to turn in drafts to me if they're expecting one round of feedback and that the 25th is the last day if they'd just like a final proof. Two parents have asked me to review their essay "suggestions," and I have politely reiterated why I love the original and shared that I don't provide feedback on writing done by adults. What they do next is outside my purview. *I've given myself space, and I've given my clients choices.* The students who turn in drafts early get the most out of our work together, but it's not up to me to ensure that it happens; those who only get a proof are just as happy too—and I've saved myself tons of energy. After a long afternoon of productive sessions, I close my laptop and head home. It's time to take my daughter to the Halloween store to pick out her costume. 🎃



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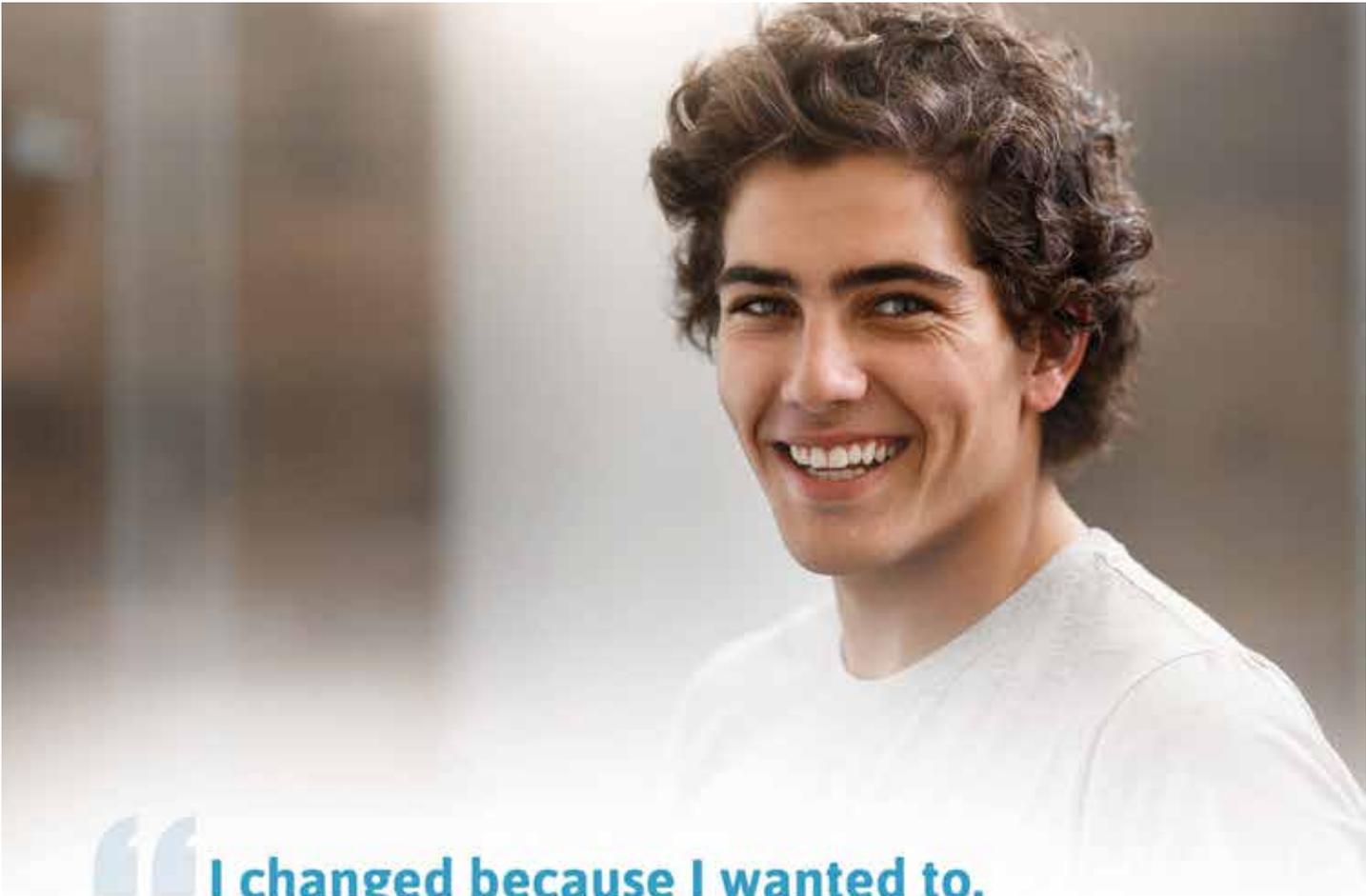
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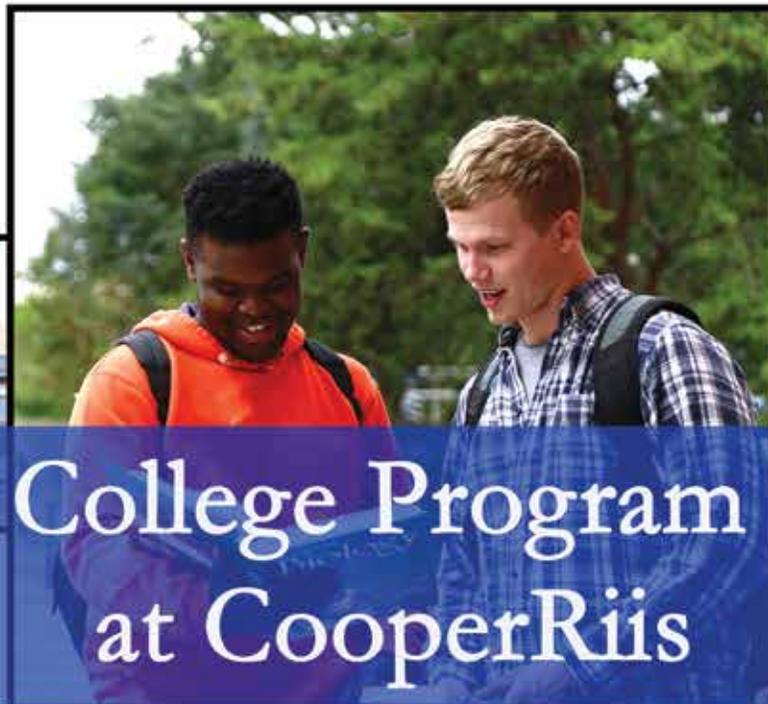
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First Year End-of-Semester Slump: Transfer Dilemma

By Joanna Lilley, MA, IECA (CO)

About six weeks into the fall semester, your phone may have started to ring. On the other end were parents or former students contacting you directly to let you know that the school they enrolled in ended up not being a great fit. They inquired about the transfer process and wanted to reengage your services to help them find that better school. Their predicament may come as no surprise or it may be a shock. It could be a student who was adamant about attending their first-choice school located over 2,000 miles from home or a student you were concerned about from the get-go who is now asking for your help. Between August and December, where did things take a turn?

To summarize what the *National College Health Assessment* (available at <https://www.acha.org/NCHA>) found, Generation Z is really struggling. Even the most talented, driven, and poised high school graduates who were expected to transition easily to the academic rigors of higher education

are also stalling out or flailing. It's a combination of the reality of what college really is coupled with preexisting mental health concerns, dependency on social media (especially when students compare themselves to peers at other institutions), and a lack of self-sufficiency because of overly involved parents. As independent educational consultants (IECs), we need to stretch our thinking to make sure we're including every detail and support available for each student, both on and off campus. Gone are the days of solely focusing on majors; now we think about whether a young person in a rural location will have access to community mental health resources. In today's climate, we must think beyond campus grounds.

Think Big Picture

If a former client contacts you about the possibility of transferring, make sure you're thinking about the big picture. Sometimes we, as IECs, help more

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Joanna Lilley, Lilley Consulting, can be reached at joanna@lilley-consulting.com.

by pushing back against a family's request than by honoring their immediate wishes. It may sound harsh, but it doesn't have to be. You want your clients to be successful. If their first semester in college was a wash, it's important to pause and make sure that helping them transfer won't perpetuate their situation and lead them into another environment where they won't find success. It's our job to help place the mirror in front of our clients and remind them, for example, that their health is more important than being on-track to graduate alongside their peers.

Winter Break Conversations

I've found that students can really sink into a depression regarding their collegiate experience during the holidays. It's so important to know how to respond when a student shows up in that state. And more importantly, how do you support parents who come to you asking for guidance?

If a student completed a full semester, especially if they earned passing grades, it's an opportunity to discuss "what to do differently next time," not necessarily talk about transferring. You might encounter a parent who pushed to have their young adult finish the semester, but they walked away with a less than ideal GPA. At that point, you will want to have a conversation with the young adult directly about their experience. Some of the questions you may ask include:

- Tell me about your semester. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your semester?
- What was the most challenging thing about being a college student last semester?
- How can I support you in being more successful, not just academically, in the spring?"

It's important to show empathy and use the rapport you have with these former clients in the hope that they'll open up to you about their struggles. You may need to stand up to a parent who is persistent about their young person transferring. In that moment, remind them that any issue a student has doesn't go away just by stepping foot on a different college campus. And you can remind financially savvy parents that they'd be gambling the money spent on tuition on a young person who may not be in a place to study.

For the most part, every young person who went to college was academically capable of college academics. It was the social and emotional aspects of their experience that threw a wrench in their going to class, completing assignments, and being able to study for exams. We often refer to executive functioning, but if a student is struggling, it won't matter whether you talk with them about time management. We must think holistically about what our clients need to be successful in earning a college degree.

Hard Transfer Truths

When a family approaches you about transferring, it's important to explain that what they're asking for is a marathon, not a sprint.

If a young adult or a family is overly concerned about being at the same pace as their peers, we need to remind them that college isn't going anywhere.

A student's standing at the end of the semester is important when considering a transfer. If a student withdrew before the end of the semester to preserve their academic records, it's still important to get to the root of where things went south. Unlike their peers with a 0.0 GPA, they at least had self-awareness of their situation and withdrew. Most colleges require 30 credits for a transfer admit, however, so do not encourage students to apply as freshman unless the specific university they're looking to transfer to requests it. Colleges run multiple National Student Clearinghouse reports each semester to identify whether students were enrolled elsewhere. If a student struggled at one university, pretending that he or she was never there and lying about enrollment could most definitely come back to haunt that student. If a parent pushes you into supporting their young adult as if they never went to college, absolutely push back. College—and adulthood for that matter—is about integrity.

If you have a student who didn't withdraw before finals and just walked away from the first semester with a 0.0 GPA, chances are he or she is either on academic probation or has already been kindly asked to not return. To transfer to another four-year school, they will need to attend a community college until they earn 30 credits. Also note that the colleges will most likely be looking at the GPA of those 30 credits and have a minimum GPA required to apply.

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Withdrawals

Withdrawing, whether it be in October, December, or retroactively, has implications for the academic futures of young scholars. That student who walked away with a 0.0 GPA can potentially apply for a Retroactive Withdrawal. That is a resource most families don't know about, and most people don't think to investigate. It's important to note that not everyone is eligible to even apply. In fact, I would not advise this option unless the student has already sought out additional therapeutic supports, whether from local resources or a residential treatment program. This option for students may be time sensitive, and I strongly encourage you to connect this young adult and their family to therapeutic resources who can also help with this process.

Finally, IECs who find themselves in this situation should connect with other local IECs in your area who are therapeutic experts. Collaborate with them to ensure that your clients are getting wraparound supports. That can also benefit you, because Therapeutic IECs work closely with families to help them understand the needs of their young adults and connect them with resources regarding parenting a young adult rather than parenting a child. 

Discussing Transfers: Tips for IECs

- Speak directly with the young adult. If the parent is the one initially reaching out to discuss transfer options, it's important to speak with the student as well. That way, you can gauge first-hand the student's experience at their current college or university. Any major issue, such as struggling with mental health, substance abuse, or recent trauma, will be carried over to a different school unless it's addressed and treated.
- Confirm with the student that they attempted to connect with on-campus resources. For example, the Disability Services Office, Counseling Center, Case Management Office, Student Success Office, or Student Engagement Office. Staff are trained to help first-year students feel connected, supported, and provide accommodations.
- Talk with the student about off-campus resources. If a student had preexisting mental health issues before enrolling on campus but didn't seek out a local therapist or psychiatrist before classes began, encourage them to do that now. Another off-campus resource could be finding a life coach or college transition coach.
- Encourage the student to see a psychologist for assessments. If they've never had an assessment done before, it could aid in identifying undiagnosed learning differences, identify career interests, and speak to a mental health diagnosis that may have been kept quiet. That type of resource can provide specific areas in which the student needs supplemental support, regardless of where they are studying.

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International Student Experiences in the United States and Abroad

By David Korb, IECA (MA) and Sandy Furth, IECA (CO)

Back in the day when I [Sandy] went to university, I didn't have much in the way of orientation. I just remember long registration lines for classes and walking down the hall of my dorm with my mom in tow (or was it me in tow?) dragging my suitcases and a trunk to my room. There was no residential life staff assisting us with the move. My roommate had already dropped her belongings on the bed she chose and was nowhere to be found. My mom and I found the bank to open an account, the bookstore, and where to go for our one activity. Luckily, I had met another student on the flight to Albuquerque, and we were able to connect later in the week. We attended the "street party" for first years, and then went merrily on. Obviously, I found my way, as we all did.

Fast forward to when our children launched and there was a never-ending list of orientation activities to make sure the transition to university was a positive experience. Now, for many reasons,

the transition to college and settling in are pretty big deals. As independent educational consultants (IECs) who work with international students, we can't help but think about the transition for those students who travel across the globe and land at a university in a strange land. Who takes care of our international students? How do they adjust? What is the honeymoon period like? How do they make friends? Those are just a few of the questions that we asked some of our students, and briefly, this is what is going on in their heads.

Friends

It seems from this very small sample that friendships span cultures. Everyone who responded said that they had friends from across cultures and that it's important to push themselves to make friends. From our responses, international students seem to like cafes and bars

continued on page 22



Sandy Furth, World Student Support, can be reached at sandy@worldservicesupport.com.



David Korb, Commonwealth Student Services of Boston, can be reached at dkorb@cssob.com.

where they can talk as opposed to the fraternities and clubs that they perceive their American counterparts prefer to frequent. A few commented that there is a noticeable divide between international students and American students.

Start of School

Generally speaking, a few of our students said the first few weeks were a challenge, but once they met other students and made friends, things were great. Two students mentioned that going to orientation was paramount; one said that is where she met her best friends for her entire university life. She also stated that her friends are mostly from her Arts and Sciences Department.

Dorms and Apartment Living

Most students agreed that dorms left a bit to be desired style wise and that shared bathrooms were a challenge. Some found their dorm rooms painfully small, but others said their dorms were really nice—and yes, we all know that we have seen some outstanding dorms. Coed bathrooms threw some students for a loop. One student was delighted that the bathrooms were cleaned daily; another complained that a suite-style bathroom was rarely cleaned. Nearly all those interviewed did not think highly of dorm food.

Many students who were sophomores or above have moved off campus and are delighted to have their own kitchens, cook for

themselves, host dinner parties, and sleep according to their own schedules. Some students live alone and appreciate the solitude.

Academics

All students agreed that it takes time to adapt to a new system. Getting used to seminar classes and writing more intensively are challenges. All students are delighted that they can get to know their professors and enjoy small classes. Of course, some of the students have larger classes of 80–120 students too. Everyone said that keeping on top of their studies is paramount, and one student noted that her International Baccalaureate education helped because it truly prepared her for the university platform.

Vacations

Students are not always able to go home for holidays and vacations. At Thanksgiving, for example, some will stay in dorms that remain open to students who are unable to go home. Other students will visit with siblings or friends within the United States. During longer holidays, some students may travel home, but for many, going home is not a financial possibility.

Students' Advice

The students were happy to offer advice to peers in the same situation:



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- Get out of your comfort zone; don't be scared; be open to being different; don't be afraid because you have an accent; go to as many events as you can find to meet some people from your home country if you are homesick.
- Try and meet your professors from the start. At first it was scary to talk in class and go to office hours.
- Join clubs—they are a great way to meet people and something that you can't do at home.
- Choose classes at the beginning that are your interests because that is where you will meet friends. My friends come from classes I enjoyed.

US Students Abroad

The two students from the United States who are studying abroad all have international friends. The academic environment is very different from the United States: one student is in an art school in Hong Kong where the arts are more challenging than expected—in a good way—although the general academic studies are a little too easy. Another student who is studying in the UK is thrilled that he has jumped into his major from the start and delighted that he doesn't have to work on liberal arts courses.

Dorms reviews have been positive. Both are enjoying having a single dorm room and cooking their own food. There are a

variety of living arrangements in UK universities, but single rooms with shared kitchens (students prepare their own food) and often a shared bath are the norm. Making friends with people from all over the world has been easy; both expected culture shock, but thus far have experienced next to none and have made amazing friends. The student in Hong Kong advises students not to be afraid to try street food! The student in the UK suggests being prepared to learn to cook in the dorm kitchen!

One parent we talked to was thankful for social media because it was a great way for her son to meet his flat mates and floor mates so that he left home knowing familiar faces. In addition, those students started a chat group and became familiar with one another before starting school. It also helped to attend the school's summer school program, which appeared to lessen anxiety about dorm life and living with strangers. 

Recommended Resources: *Survive and Thrive: The International Student's Guide to Succeeding in the US* and *The Global Nomad's Guide to University Transition* by Tina L Quick.

Authors' note: With thanks to international students from Afghanistan, Argentina, Peru, Slovakia, United States, and India who attend Art University Bournemouth, Boston University, College of William and Mary, Connecticut College, Northeastern University, and Savannah College of Art and Design—Hong Kong.

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Campus Visits

WOW Tour

IECA members visited 13 colleges and universities in Western Oregon and Washington State on September 9–13: University of Washington, Seattle University, Seattle Pacific University, University of Puget Sound, The Evergreen State College, Reed College, University of Portland, Portland State University (pictured), Oregon State University, University of Oregon, Willamette University, Lewis & Clark College.



Carroll College

Washington State IECA members Maggie Hunkins, Teri Thompson, Kiersten Murphy, and Donna Mezey, Student member, participated in a counselor fly-in to Carroll College in Montana in October.



2019 Fall Tour in the Berkshires

In October, IECA members visited Miss Hall's, Simon's Rock, Buxton, and Darrow on the Fall Tour in the Berkshires. IECA members pictured are John Gu (MA), Lee McLendon (VT), Xiang (Shawn) Wan (MA), Caroline Fisk (NC), Wesley Fondal, Jr. (GA), Karen Kindler, (CA), Deb Felix (MD), Jennie Kent (Bogota), and Anjanita Mahadoo (MA).



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On the Road



▲ In December, **Mark Sklarow**, IECA CEO, joined Donna Orem, CEO of the National Association of Independent Schools, and Heather Hoerle, executive director of Enrollment Management Association, on a panel about the impact of admission scandals and other changes in college admission and how those changes could affect independent school admission. The panel was in DC at the annual EMA conference.



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In the News

Rebecca Joseph (CA) was quoted in “Whose Advice Are You Taking? The Fight Over College Counseling at Elite High Schools” in the *Wall Street Journal* on October 28.

Hanna Stotland (IL) was quoted in “Getting ‘Varsity Blues’ Kids Into College After Scandal Is ‘New Frontier of Disadvantage’: Admissions Consultant” in *Newsweek* on October 24.

Mark Sklarow, IECA CEO, authored “In the Wake of the Admission Scandal: Transparency Is Critical” in *Leadership Exchange*, published by NASPA in the Summer 2019 issue. He was also quoted in “Ethical College Admissions: Declaration of Independents” [op ed] in *Inside Higher Ed* on September 23.

Lisa Carlton (TX) was quoted in “Don’t Let College Visits Break the Bank” in the *Star Tribune* on September 26.

Hilary Lehn (BC), **Teo Salgado** (ON) and IECA CEO **Mark Sklarow** were quoted in “Finding the Right Fit” in the *Globe and Mail* on September 27.

Laurie Kopp Weingarten (NJ) was quoted in “A New Wrinkle in the College Admissions Process,” in Crain’s Chicago Business on October 7; “Teachers Race to Finish Piles of Student Recommendations” in the *Wall Street Journal* on October 30;

“Three FAQs to Know as Your Deadline Nears” and “Admissions Dean: Many Colleges Recalculate GPAs” in *College Confidential* on October 28 and November 11, respectively.

Gina Gerrato Greenhaus (CA) was quoted in “College Planning and Success With Learning Differences” in *Next Step* magazine’s Fall 2019 issue.

Paul Rivas (DC) was quoted in “Homework Help: Advice, Tips, and Tricks” in *Chesapeake Family Life* magazine on September 13.

Kiersten Murphy (WA) was quoted in the article “Should You Apply to College ‘Early Action’? Check These FAQs” in the *Seattle Times* on October 25.

Stephanie Kennedy, Associate member (IL), was quoted in “Navigate the college admissions process without losing your mind” on October 25 in the *Seattle Times*.



Initiatives

Brenda Gerhardt (OH) was awarded the 2019 Susan Jones Sears Distinguished Alumni Award in Counselor Education at The Ohio State University during a reception in her honor at the All Ohio Counselors Conference on November 7.

Jenifer Aquino (Singapore) delivered professional development and spoke about **IECA** to counselors and teachers at international schools in Dubai and Abu Dhabi on October 7.

The Red Pen, with **Kavita Mehta** and Associate members **Kimberly Dixit** and **Tripti Singh**, all from Mumbai, partnered with Linden Educational Services and Crayons Academy for Skills Excellence to host 24 leading boarding schools from the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada in India on November 6 to introduce parents to a variety of boarding school options.

For the second year, **Carolyn Mulligan** (NJ) presented the “College Search Process for Students with Disabilities” at homecoming for the Windward School—a school for students with learning differences—in White Plains, NY.

Ohio members **Kristina Dooley**, **Susan Isler**, and **David Amkraut**, Associate member, met with Dan Haasis from the Rochester Institute of Technology when he visited Dooley’s office. ▼





Why I Belong

IECA Keeps Me Current

By Sandy Clingman, EdM, IECA (VA)



As an independent educational consultant (IEC), I often find myself answering questions by saying:

“It depends.”

“Usually, but there are exceptions.”

“Each institution has its own policy.”

Every year I help new students and families understand that the college admissions process is never one-size-fits-all. Sometimes there is no definitive answer for a question or sometimes the answer is nuanced or abstruse. It's important that I can articulate my response in a way that helps my students better understand a procedure or make more-informed decisions.

Changes and surprises can also confound admission guidance. A new, seemingly difficult-to-navigate application may be introduced. Students may be offered an unexpected option pre- or post-

application, such as starting the term before or after the requested fall session. An institution may unexpectedly reverse a longstanding policy (such as advocating for years against the Early Decision application option and then not only adding it but also scheduling the deadline for the earliest possible date). Whatever it is, I need to know about it before my families do!

IECA is my go-to resource for ongoing professional development. Daily online support from members worldwide, regular local meetings with admission reps, semi-annual conferences, and year-round college tours provide access to the most relevant training and updates I need to do my job well. I recommend IECA membership to anyone who wants to provide reliable and trustworthy college admission consulting services.

Sandy Clingman, SJC College Counseling LLC, can be reached at sandy@bettercollegechoices.com.



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Katherine Kelly has worked in both public and private Christian school settings and has great experience serving in a professional development leadership capacity.

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Regional Groups

Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Regional Group was busy with several events in October: meeting with Jordyn Fleming, admissions counselor at High Point University on October 1; Molly Noyed, associate director of admissions at Lake Forest College on October 7; and Dawn Marie Walker, manager of PA Recruitment for Michigan State University on October 21. On October 26, Jesse Bosco, admissions counselor at Monmouth University (NJ), hosted members and Katie Strong, college admissions rep from Quinnipiac University, met with the group. *For more information about this group, please contact Fran Manning-Smith at fran@stepplanning.com.*



IECA members pictured at High Point University are Sandy Aprahamian, Fran Manning Smith, Elizabeth Trupkovich, Lou Anne Bulik, Sue Crump, Debbie Blume, and Cigus Vanni.



Members at Lake Forest were Carol Tunstall, Fran Manning-Smith (Associate), Elizabeth Trupkovich, Cigus Vanni, Joan Koven, Debbie Blume, Luisa Rabe, Laura Blanche Joanne LaSpina, and Rachel Sobel.

Seattle

The Seattle group met with Andrea Frangi of George Washington University on October 30. Pictured are Lauren Gaylord, Michelle Silbernagel, Kate Griffin, Linda Gorordo, Cynthia Seidel, Jill O'Keefe, Eileen Restrepo, Kiersten Murphy, and Andrea Frangi.



The Seattle group also visited Pacific Lutheran University, where they spent the morning on campus learning about their new BFA program in musical theatre as well as their nursing program. Pictured are Anita Chung, Kate Griffin, Kiersten Murphy, Eileen Restrepo, Teri Thompson, and Maggie Hunkins. *For more information about this group, please contact Kiersten Murphy at kiersten@schoolconsultant.com.*



Ohio, Michigan and Western Pennsylvania

It took a great deal of planning for a group that usually meets virtually to get together to host President Tim Cost from Jacksonville University on September 9 in Cleveland (pictured). The group also visited the College of Wooster and met with representatives from Verto Education, a gap year program, on November 4.



For more information about this group, please contact Jason Vallozzi at jason@campustocareercrossroads.com.

New Jersey

The New Jersey group had a surprise guest at the October luncheon when Stacey Kovalycsik, New Jersey regional recruiter for Penn State, brought along David Kuskowski, director of admissions from Clemson University, who once also worked at Penn.

Pictured are Hildie Steiner, Jill Siegel, David Kuskowski, Blakely Slater, Lynne Rosenfeld, Carolyn Mulligan, Stacey Kovalycsik, Shari Powell, Stephanie Ackerman, Amy Hallock, Melanie Talesnick, Traecy Hobson, and Pamela Kwartler. *For information about this group, please contact Carolyn Mulligan at insidersnetwork@comcast.net.*





Announcing the 2019 Irvin W. Katz Service Award

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

This year, the IECA Foundation is delighted to present the Katz Award to Kathy Rose, IECA (TX) for her work with CollegeCommunityCareer, an organization she founded in 2012 to help low-income, first generation students on the west side of the greater Houston area attend college. Since 2012, CollegeCommunityCareer has served over 1,000 students. In 2019, 114 seniors received over \$4,110,000 in scholarships and grants. 100% graduated high school. 99% are low income and 98% are first generation.

The program is built on four pillars: College Success, Career Discovery, Leadership Development, and Civic Engagement. Their vision is an employed, civically minded college graduate.

Congratulations to Kathy for her dedication and commitment to the success of students in her community!



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Introductions

Please Welcome IECA's New Professional Members



John Catalano (NY) has been an IEC for 7 years and was an Associate member. After spending more than 25 years as a senior healthcare executive, he chose to pursue his passion

for higher education. He also held faculty appointments as vice dean at New York University School of Medicine and adjunct assistant professor at New York University.

An active member of the community, Catalano sits on the board of directors at NYU Winthrop Hospital, where he serves on the Medical Education and Research Committee. He also holds an appointment on the advisory board of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory research institute. His previous board appointments include Make-a-Wish of Metro New York; South Nassau Communities Hospital; Grenville Baker Boys and Girls Club; and The Heart Council of Long Island, where he was chairman of the board.

Catalano holds an MPA from NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, where he earned the Lepasqueur Award, and is a doctoral candidate in the DrPH program at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, with a research focus on mental health disorders among college and healthcare professional students. He received a graduate certificate in college counseling from UCLA Extension and is a member of IACAC and the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE).

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Linda Daley (NH) has been an IEC for one year and was an Associate member. She has more than 20 years of private school experience working in a diverse set of

schools, including Phillips Exeter Academy, Brooks School, Berwick Academy, and Tilton School. She played many roles, including director of admission and financial aid, math teacher, coach, dorm head, and advisor.

Before finding her path in education, Linda was a management consultant for Booz, Allen & Hamilton and for Mercer Consulting and served as the director of career services at Harvard Business School. It was there that she decided to take her own advice to "do what you love and not get caught up with what everyone else is doing."

Daley earned a BS in mathematics and philosophy from Vanderbilt University and an MBA from Harvard Business School. While at Harvard, she also took courses at the Graduate School of Education.

Active in her community, Daley has served as the board chair of two educational nonprofits and is currently a board member of the Seacoast Women's Giving Circle.

Daley lives in Portsmouth, NH, with her husband and 11-year-old daughter. An avid traveler, she has been to all 50 states and every continent except Antarctica. Her happy place is in the mountains, hiking and skiing with her family.

*Linda Daley, MBA
Linda Daley Educational Consulting
126 Spring Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801
617-872-6515
linda.c.daley@gmail.com
https://daleyeducationalconsulting.com
Specialty: S*



Kendall Guess (TX) has been an IEC for 6 years and was an Associate member. The 15 years she spent volunteering or working at her daughter's schools, including volunteering

in the International Baccalaureate office, gave her incentive to seek out mentors and pursue the education necessary to become an IEC.

Guess has a BS in journalism and public relations from Oklahoma State University and earned a college admission counseling certificate from UCSD Extension. She is a member of TACAC and NACAC. Before becoming an IEC, she served as president of St. Theresa Catholic School Board and on the Austin Diocesan School Board.

Guess has recently begun assisting the college counseling office at her son's school to organize and present all parent information as it relates to college admissions, financial aid, and building a potential college list. She is also overseeing essay and application workshops for the students.

Married more than 30 years, Guess and her husband have two grown daughters and a son in middle school. When she is not working, she is often at middle school events, such as soccer games or orchestra concerts.

*Kendall Guess
Path to Admissions
1921 Long Bow Drive
Leander, TX 78641
512-550-4035
kendall@pathtoadmissions.com
www.pathtoadmissions.com
Specialty: C*

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Gina Lee (CA) has been an IEC for 6 years. Previously, she was director of college counseling, 11th & 12th grade academic dean, at

American University Preparatory School (grades 9–12), where she designed, launched, and oversaw a comprehensive college counseling program for US and international high school students. Independent educational consulting isn't her first career but her third, and she finds that innovation comes from applying concepts and lessons from other industries and experiences to her work as an IEC.

Lee earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor, and a college counseling certificate from UCLA Extension. She is a member of NACAC, WACAC, and International ACAC.

Currently, Lee is a member of the Enrollment Committee for High Point Academy K–8 and is working to strategically market the redesigned visual and performing arts program and maker's space. She is a former board member of Pasadena Unified School District Mandarin Immersion Program (K–5).

Lee is married with three sons—the two oldest have graduated from college and both work as management consultants in San Francisco and the youngest is in middle school. She enjoys reading nonfiction and autobiographies or memoirs and avidly listens to podcasts about start-ups, such as NPR's *How I Built This* and *Masters of Scale*. She also enjoys traveling, especially in Asia, and is totally into different kinds of food. Her family is used to her excursions to visit college campuses at every opportunity.

Gina Lee
Gina B. Lee Consulting
501 Grand Avenue South
Pasadena, CA 91030
626-390-1638
ginablee@gmail.com
https://www.ginablee.com
Specialty: C+I



Kan (Steve) Li (Beijing) has been an IEC for 9 years and was an Associate member. For 7 years, Li

has been working with Guangzhou No.6 High School International Academy, first establishing its college counseling office and now leading three colleagues. While in college, he worked for the New Oriental Group (a private educational service provider) as an SAT tutor and in management roles in multiple positions, which led him to change his career trajectory from aerospace engineer to educator.

Li earned a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering with a minor in English and a master's degree in English and literature from Beijing University of Astronautics and Aeronautics. He is a member of IACAC and was on the Session Review and Selection Committee for the 2019 IACAC conference.

At Guangzhou No.6, where many students are first gen, he established a counseling course that covers every major part of a college application and introduced the Naviance platform. In addition to writing more than 100 articles about US college application on WeChat, he published a tutoring book on the SAT writing section and coauthored a book on the US college application process, both the first of their kind in mainland China.

Li and his wife have a six-month-old boy named Charlie to honor his favorite cartoon character Charlie Brown.

Kan (Steve) Li, MA
Youfang Education Consulting
3-802 Xihai Guoji Zhongzhi
Haidian District, Beijing 100086
China
(8610) 82169639
likan@yfeducation.com
www.yfeducation.com
Specialty: C+I



Tess Robinson (Shanghai) has worked as an IEC for 19 years. In addition to her work with students applying to colleges, she also provides education

classes to teach foreign parents about US educational options and supports younger students to build study and communication skills. Previously, she was a product manager for McNeil Consumer Products and a senior product manager and VP of marketing for Revlon.

Robinson has an AB from Stanford University, an MBA from Harvard Business School, and a certificate in college counseling from UCLA Extension. She is a member of NACAC.

In addition to her work, Robinson serves as chair of the board for the Community Center Shanghai, where she has been on the board for eight years and chair for three, providing strategic guidance and developing partnerships for funding. She is the head of parish council for Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish and founded and served as president for Parents of Pudong, the parent association at Yew Cheung International School. She volunteers and is spokeswoman for More Than Aware, which raises funds to support the Shanghai Cancer Recovery Center with a focus on prevention and recovery.

Robinson has been married to Bruce for 26 years. They have three boys in college: Miles is at Pomona College, Spencer is at Stanford University, and Oliver is at Santa Clara University. She also enjoys running, kickboxing, tennis, studying languages, theatre, cooking, and knitting.

Teresa (Tess) Robinson, MBA
TEAM Education Consulting
2000 Yunshan Road, No 49
Shanghai 201206
China
(8621) 58334630
tess@teameduconsult.com
www.teameduconsult.com
Specialty: C+I



Jennifer Taylor (CA) has been an IEC for 3 years and was an Associate member. Previously, she was a healthcare consultant, an IEP consultant and advocate, and chairwoman of the Autism Society of the West Shore.

Taylor holds a BA from Dartmouth College and a JD from the University of San Francisco School of Law. She is a candidate for a certificate in Child and Adolescent Treatment from UC Berkeley. She attended IECA's 2016 Summer Training Institute and is a member of the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA).

Taylor was an NPR Commentator; published articles in the *Independent Journal Newspaper* in Marin County, CA; and wrote the preface to a chapter in *Safety Skills for Asperger Women: How to Save a Perfectly Good Female Life* by Liane Holliday Willey. She has cochaired the Alternative Educational Fair–Bay Area since 2017 and been a fundraiser for the Sky's the Limit Fund; a facilitator for Willows in the Wind, a nonprofit parent support group in Marin County; and a presenter to STAR Academy parent and community groups.

Taylor is the mother of two boys, ages 17 and 19, one of whom needed more than two years of residential treatment and two years in a learning difference boarding school. Her other son is in boarding school as well. She is an avid runner, biker, yogi, and voracious reader of anything related to mental health and personal wellness. She dedicates every day to being the change she wants to see in the world!

Jennifer Taylor, JD
 JET ED Consulting
 775 East Blithedale, #323
 Mill Valley, CA 94941
 415-887-8998
 jennifer@jetedconsulting.com
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From Dr. Timothy Renick's presentation at IECA's 2019 Atlanta Conference, "How Georgia State Eliminated Equity Gaps through Data & Analytics"



	2009-10	2018-19	Change	% Change
African American	1,001	2,241	+1,039	+124%
Pell	1,298	3,711	+1,659	+186%
Hispanic	196	567	+313	+189%



To download Dr. Renick's full presentation, go to: link.iecaonline.com/Equity-Gaps