

IECA⁺ INSIGHTS

THE JOURNAL OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

Summer 2023

Considerations for Students

Amidst State Policies Impacting
Higher Education

INSIDE



15
Evaluating online
courses for fit



23
A discussion about the
SCOTUS affirmative
action ruling



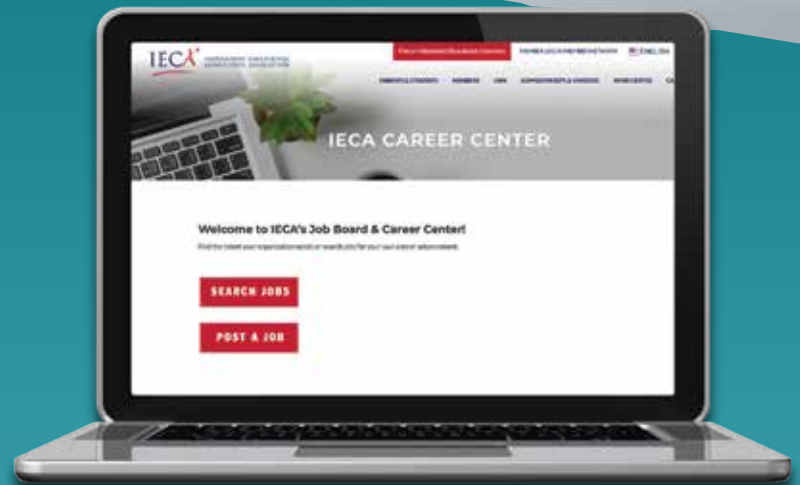
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The Wild West of
neuropsych assessments

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President's Letter

Serving Our Members as External Challenges Arise

"The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe..."
On January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy (JFK) delivered his famous inaugural speech, following tumultuous and exhausting wars and struggles, both domestic and abroad. Little did he know the country would move into even greater struggles immediately after his assumption of the office, continuing for at least another decade.

The saying "History repeats itself" is both accurate and real. The fact is one can view countries and their leaders in the same lens as businesses or organizations and their leaders. As a student of history, I have learned to appreciate and study historical events,

figures, and times and apply the lessons in my personal and professional life.

While IECA in 2023 is not nearly in as much distress and turmoil as JFK's America was in 1961, the external forces recently and currently for both entities require a similar response from their leaders and constituents. America prior to JFK's era dealt with the fallout from WWII, the rise of communism, another consequential war (i.e., Korean War), and economic and social distress. Even then, the constituents of America (i.e., citizens) trusted their system of government, went to the polls, and made the 1960 election the highest turnout in 40 years.

IECA in recent years dealt with the Varsity Blues Scandal, legislative attempts to limit our operations in certain states, pandemic fallout, impact of artificial intelligence in our



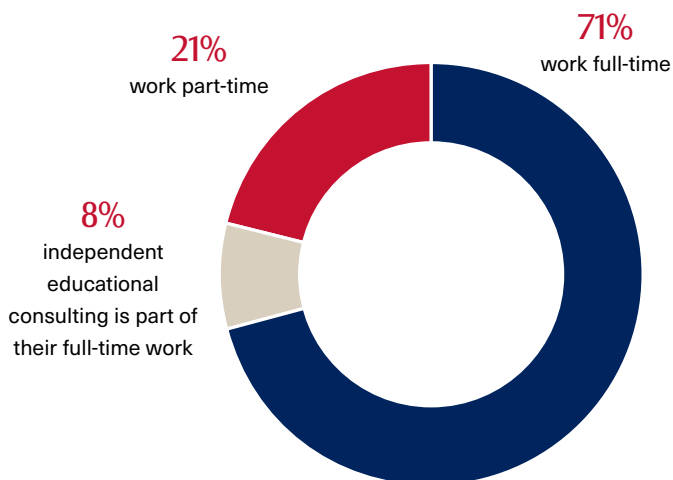
Ibrahim Firat

businesses, politicization of education in certain states, SCOTUS decisions that impact our students and families, and more. It is not the end of it, and it will not be. What has IECA done to deal with these external forces? Through educational programming and events such as conferences, retreats, and workshops in traditional and innovative forms, we pivoted as needed and continued to educate our members on these forces so that you may take the most applicable and effective steps to continue to serve your clients. By forming a Government Relations Committee, we started advocating for you and our students on issues that we can provide expertise. Through new partnerships with other organizations and educational institutions, we elevated your membership value. In return, you registered

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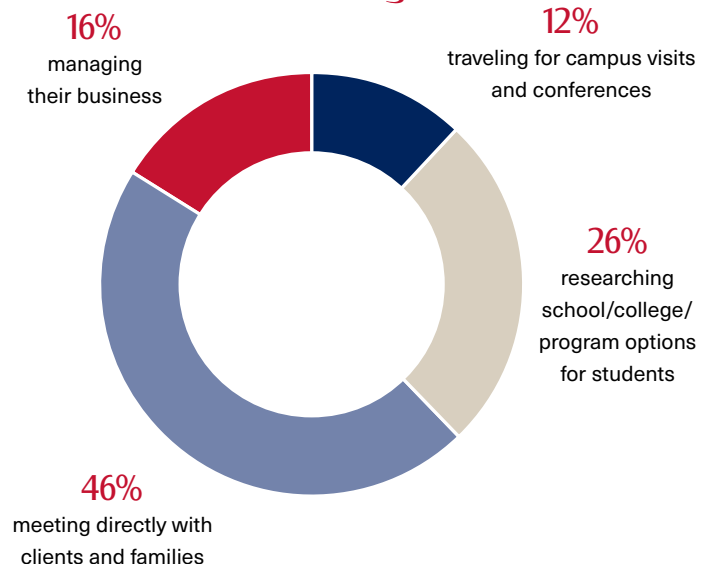
In Focus

IEC Work Status of IECA Professional Members



Based on a 2022 survey of 1,000 IECA members

How IECA Members Spend Their Working Time



Calendar

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

Month	Day	Event
AUGUST	02	Wellness Wednesday Drop-in Zoom Rural/Small Town Affinity Group Meeting MBA Roundtable
	04	Gateway to Graduate School Consulting
	09	Wellness Wednesday Drop-in Zoom Austin Regional Group Meeting
	10	New Member Welcome Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting
	11	Consultants with Young Children Affinity Group Meeting Business Practices Roundtable
	14	The Post-Pandemic Landscape of Educational Consulting (Presented by IECA and UCI)
SEPTEMBER	14	Schools Committee Open House
	15	Wellness Wednesday Drop-in Zoom Homeschooling Affinity Group Meeting
	16	LGBTQIA+ & Allies Roundtable LGBTQIA+ Community Members Only
	17	Associate & Student Members Roundtable
	18	Professional Members Roundtable
	22	IECA Annual Town Hall
OCTOBER	23	Wellness Wednesday Drop-in Zoom
	24	Jewish IECs Affinity Group Meeting
	25	Global Gathering Open Forum Large IEC Business Affinity Group Meeting
	01	Gateway to Graduate School Consulting
	04	Labor Day: IECA Office Closed
	05	Bay Area Regional Group (BARGE) Meeting
AUGUST	06	Rural/Small Town Affinity Group Meeting MBA Roundtable
	08	Consultants with Young Children Affinity Group Meeting Business Practices Roundtable
	11	IECA Fall College Tour: Pittsburgh to Cincinnati September 11-14
	14	Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting
	15	Associate & Student Members Roundtable Professional Members Roundtable
	19	Schools Committee Open House
SEPTEMBER	20	Transitioning to Private Practice College Consulting Workshop (Presented by IECA at NACAC Conference) Homeschooling Affinity Group Meeting
	21	LGBTQIA+ & Allies Roundtable LGBTQIA+ Community Members Only
	27	Global Gathering Open Forum Regional Group Leaders Meeting
	03	Bay Area Regional Group (BARGE) Meeting
	04	Rural/Small Town Affinity Group Meeting MBA Roundtable
	12	New Member Welcome Black IECs Affinity Group Meeting
OCTOBER	13	Business Practices Roundtable
	17	Schools Committee Open House
	18	Homeschooling Affinity Group Meeting
	19	Jewish IECs Affinity Group Meeting
	20	Professional Members Roundtable
	25	Global Gathering Open Forum
AUGUST	27	Associate & Students Members Roundtable

IECA Annual Town Hall

August 22, 1 p.m. ET

Join us live on Zoom on August 22 for the annual IECA Town Hall. You'll hear from CEO Mark Sklarow and Board President Ibrahim Firat on the state of the association, how we have come through the 2022-23 year, and what plans and new ideas are being implemented in the months ahead. A number of IECA officers will explore what IECA's committees, Affinity Groups, and Regional Groups have planned for the coming year. For more information, visit the Member Network: network.IECAonline.com

Learning, Networking, and Fun at the IECA 2023 Spring Conference



Conference Central was a hub of networking activity for IECs, vendors, and service providers.



Board President Ibrahim Firat and CEO Mark Sklarow provided an inside look at the association's work.



The College & Postsecondary Fair, K-12 School Exchange, and Therapeutic Info Swap were fantastic ways for IECs to connect with admission reps from schools, colleges, and programs.



Conference sessions explored the latest issues impacting the IEC profession.



IEC Roundtables gave attendees an opportunity to exchange ideas on specific topics.



The conference brought together hundreds of IECs and admission reps from across the country and around the world.



Seattle was a great setting for our conference—and we lucked into beautiful, sunny weather all week!



Conference attendees were able to choose from more than 60 educational (and entertaining) sessions.



On the bus for one of the many pre-conference college tours available for IECA members!



The IECA Networking Reception was a fun, casual way to connect with fellow attendees.

President's Letter, from page 4

and attended events, shared your love for IECA with your colleagues to encourage them to join, and volunteered in our events and committees. You believed in IECA despite the negative external forces that threatened our peace. You are the epitome of the spirit of the American citizens who voted in the 1960 elections!

In just a couple of months, we will be in Florida for our conference. The negative external forces we have navigated thus far are amplified for this particular location due to recent political developments in Florida. However, our conference is not centered around politics. Instead, it focuses on advancing our field through education, research, and networking opportunities. By gathering in Florida, we aim to harness the existing resources and expertise within and beyond the state to benefit you. Learning with and supporting colleagues from around the country is one of the greatest benefits IECA members experience in our network.

Additionally, IECA is rooted in principles of diversity, open dialogue, and respect for differing viewpoints. By engaging with one another in a respectful manner, we can foster greater understanding and unity within our community. When we initially chose Florida as the location for this year's conference about five years ago, we considered various aspects such as accessibility, available facilities, local expertise, visits to local campuses (both public and private), and more. Our primary goal is to provide a platform where members can share knowledge, collaborate, and grow professionally.

In order to make this primary goal a reality given the challenges, I recently formed the **IECA Road To Florida 2023 Task Force** whose sole mission is to work with our conference staff and local authorities to explore new opportunities, develop tools and programming, and forge new partnerships in Florida. This group has been hard at work since mid-June and continues its mission until the conference closes in November. I invite you to share your ideas and concerns with Task Force Chair and Board Member Heidi Molbak (IECA's VP for Committees) so that your voice is heard and your ideas are implemented. You will receive updates and exciting new developments from the Task Force or our staff in the coming months.

"So let us begin anew..." As JFK exclaimed 62 years ago when he called on the citizens of America to take action: *"And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."* As your association's president, I ask you, my fellow members: **Ask not whether you should attend the Florida conference, ask how you can contribute and make the best of the Florida conference.**

Note: 100 percent of this article was written with HUMAN intelligence.



Ibrahim Firat, MBA
IECA President



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Considerations for Students Amidst State Policies Impacting Higher Education

By Eva Garza-Nyer, PhD, CEP, IECA (TX) and Justin Wang, MBA, MA, IECA Associate (CA)

When it comes to building a college list, students must consider various factors that influence their academic journey and overall college experience. One crucial aspect often overlooked is the influence of state policies on higher education. While every state has its own unique policies, some can have a negative impact on students. According to recent surveys, a concerning trend has emerged, revealing that one in four students surveyed has decided not to apply to a college based on the political climate of the state in which the institution is located. This decision cuts across the political spectrum, affecting liberals, moderates, and conservatives alike. Additionally, a significant number of LGBTQ identifying students (32 percent), expressed their hesitation to consider colleges in certain states due to potential challenges related to their identity. (Source: Jascik, Scott, "The Role of Politics in Where

Students Want to Go to College," *Inside Higher Ed*, March 27, 2023.)

Issues commonly mentioned when considering the impact of state policies on college choices include reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, a state's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in higher education, and firearms regulations. These policy areas have become significant touchpoints in the political landscape and can have far-reaching consequences for students.

Reproductive Rights

State policies regarding reproductive rights, particularly those related to abortion, have become increasingly polarizing. Some states have implemented

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Justin Wang, Trifecta Education Associates LLC, can be reached at justin@trifectaed.com.

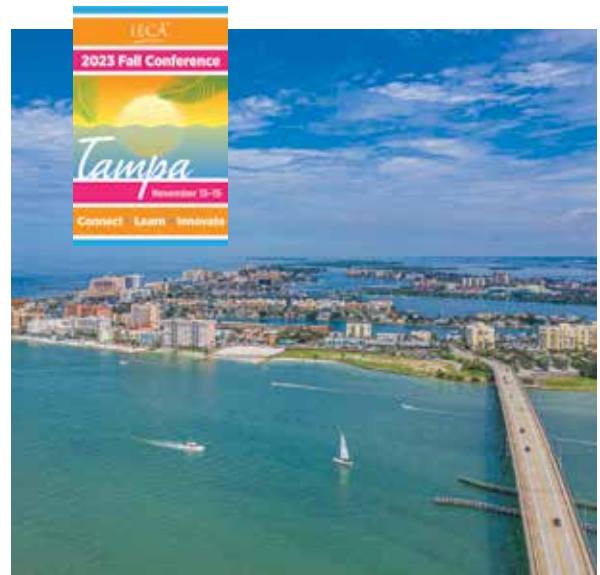
Join Us for IECA's Fall Conference

November 13–15, 2023 · Tampa, FL

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with hundreds of independent educational consultant colleagues from around the world, network with school, college, and program representatives, and learn about issues impacting the IEC profession.

Our fall conference features:

- **College, school, and program tours** before and after the conference;
- **Pre-conference workshops** offering deep dives into a variety of topics;
- **More than 60 educational sessions** on cutting-edge business and marketing solutions, adolescent issues, admission trends, and more, including new leading edge/advanced breakouts geared toward experienced IECs and admission leaders;
- Our ever-popular **College & Postsecondary Fair, K-12 School Exchange, and Therapeutic Info Swap**;
- A **Wellness Lounge** quiet room for all attendees to use as a respite from the intensity of the conference.



ACE (Adolescence, Consulting, and Education) Speakers



Shanterra McBride and **Rosalind Wiseman**, co-authors of *Courageous Discomfort: How to Have Important, Brave, Life-Changing Conversations about Race and Racism*, will discuss how to have respectful, meaningful conversations even when the topic is difficult or fraught.

Shanterra McBride is a teacher, speaker, author, and preacher with expertise in youth development, diversity, and inclusion and allyship. In 2014 she founded Marvelous University, a social enterprise designed to meet the diverse needs of girls and young women as they navigate life.

Rosalind Wiseman challenges us to understand the power of dignity to build courage, connection, and community. She is the author of nine books and a speaker, advisor, and thought leader on leadership, culture, conflict, and young people.



Grant Cornwell, president of Rollins College in Winter Park, FL, will talk about the challenges colleges are experiencing today, including the state of universities in hyperpolitical times. Under Cornwell's leadership, applications, enrollment, and student diversity have been the highest in Rollins' history. Recognized for his work in defining liberal learning in a global environment, Cornwell writes regularly about democracy, diversity, and global citizenship.



Luncheon Speaker

Katherine Reynolds Lewis is an award-winning journalist, speaker, and the author of *The Good News About Bad Behavior: Why Kids Are Less Disciplined Than Ever – And What to Do About It*. Her talk will focus on teen mental and behavioral health, what we're seeing as the ongoing impact of COVID, and how to work with teens' millennial parents.

Why Kids Are Less Disciplined Than Ever – And What to Do About It. Her talk will focus on teen mental and behavioral health, what we're seeing as the ongoing impact of COVID, and how to work with teens' millennial parents.

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McLean Hospital
Polygence
University of Tampa
Winston Prep Online

Conference registration will open in late August. Visit link.IECAonline.com/Conference-Info for the most up-to-date information.

State Policies, from page 9

restrictive measures, limiting access to reproductive healthcare and imposing regulations that can impact personal choices. For students and parents who prioritize reproductive rights and wish to attend colleges in states with more liberal policies in this area, these restrictions can be a deciding factor in their college selection process.

The Guttmacher Institute is a leading research and policy organization focused on sexual and reproductive health. Their website provides comprehensive information on state-level reproductive health policies, including abortion regulations, contraception access, and reproductive rights. www.guttmacher.org

For students and parents who prioritize reproductive rights and wish to attend colleges in states with more liberal policies in this area, these restrictions can be a deciding factor in their college selection process.

LGBTQ Rights

LGBTQ rights have gained significant visibility and advocacy in recent years, but disparities still exist among states regarding protections and inclusive policies. Some states have enacted legislation that can be seen as discriminatory or lacking in support for LGBTQ individuals, such as restrictions on transgender rights, including health care and

access to hormone treatments, or bathroom access. LGBTQ identifying students may prioritize attending colleges in states with more progressive policies to ensure their rights, safety, and inclusion.

Sites for you to utilize in an effort to empower your clients include:

- 2023 Anti-Trans Legislation. www.tracktranslegislation.com
- State Equality Index (SEI) is a comprehensive state-by-state report that provides a review of statewide laws and policies that affect LGBTQ+ people and their families. www.hrc.org/resources/state-equality-index
- Freedom for All Americans is tracking each relevant bill in their 2022 Legislative Tracker, in partnership with the Equality Federation. <https://freedomforallamericans.org/legislative-tracker/anti-lgbtq-bills>
- Protect Trans Students: 10 Concrete Ways to Protect Trans Students in High School and College. <https://linktr.ee/shannon.bergeron>
- Human Rights Campaign is the largest LGBTQ advocacy organization in the United States. Their website offers resources and reports on LGBTQ rights and equality, including state-by-state information on laws, policies, and LGBTQ-friendly institutions. www.hrc.org
- Campus Pride is a national organization focused on creating safe and inclusive college environments for LGBTQ students. Their website provides resources, including a Campus Climate Index, to assess

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colleges' LGBTQ-inclusive policies and support services.
www.campuspride.org

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

News has surfaced regarding the ban on DEI training in public institutions. This ban restricts the ability of colleges and universities to implement programs and initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, addressing systemic inequalities, and fostering inclusive environments on campuses. Policies that inhibit DEI efforts can have far-reaching consequences for students. Colleges and universities play a crucial role in preparing students for a diverse and interconnected world, and a lack of support for DEI initiatives can hinder the educational experience and personal growth of students from marginalized communities. It is essential for students to consider how such policies may impact their ability to engage in inclusive learning environments, access support services, and thrive academically and socially.

Colleges and universities play a crucial role in preparing students for a diverse and interconnected world, and a lack of support for DEI initiatives can hinder the educational experience and personal growth of students from marginalized communities.

When building a college list, students should actively research the DEI initiatives and commitments of each institution they are considering. They can review college websites, mission statements, and campus climate surveys to gauge the level of support for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, engaging in conversations with current students and faculty from diverse backgrounds can provide valuable insights into the campus community's inclusivity.

Here are a few additional resources your students may use:

DEI Legislation Tracker. www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts

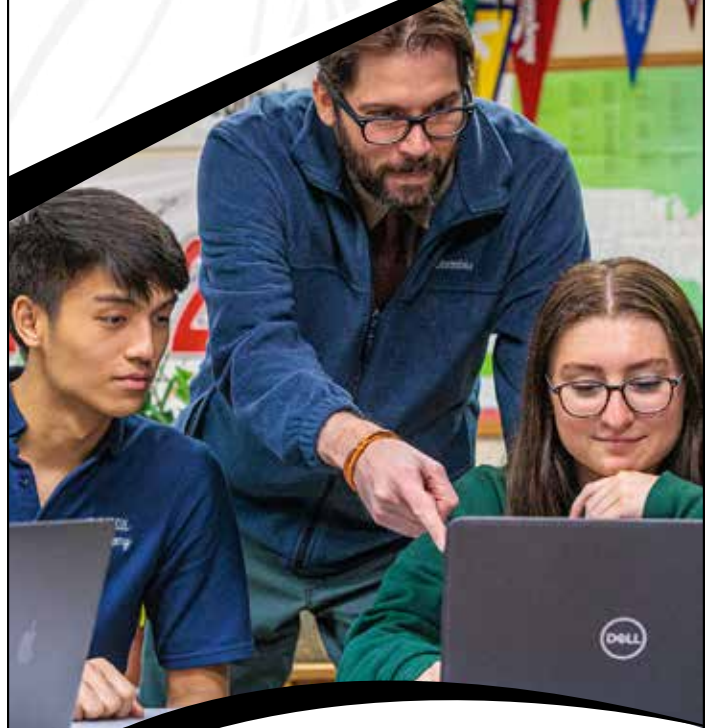
College Equity Index. <https://collegeequityfirst.org/explore-the-index-1>

Firearms Regulations

Gun control policies and regulations vary widely across states, and this issue has also become a factor for students when considering college choices. Some students may feel strongly about attending colleges in states that have stricter gun control laws, while others may prioritize institutions in states with more relaxed regulations or stronger support for Second Amendment rights. Safety concerns and personal beliefs regarding firearms can significantly influence a student's decision-making process.

The Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence is dedicated to promoting gun safety and preventing gun violence. Their website provides information on state gun laws, regulations, and advocacy efforts to ensure responsible firearm policies. <https://giffords.org>

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Strategies for College-Bound Students

Here are some strategies to help students navigate this complex landscape:


- **Research State Policies:** Students should actively research and familiarize themselves with the political climate, policies, and legislation of states they are considering. This includes understanding the stance of state governments on issues such as reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, and firearms regulations. Reliable sources, including official state websites, reputable news outlets, and advocacy organizations, can provide valuable insights.
- **Engage in Campus Conversations:** Prospective students can engage in discussions with current students, faculty, and staff at the colleges they are considering. Campus visits, virtual tours, and information sessions are great opportunities to ask questions about how state policies may impact student life, support services, and the overall campus environment.
- **Seek Support Networks:** Students can connect with support networks, student organizations, or affinity groups on campus that advocate for their specific concerns or interests. These communities can provide valuable guidance and a sense of belonging for students who may be affected by state policies.
- **Prioritize Personal Values:** Students should reflect on their own personal values and consider how these align with the policies of a particular state. It is crucial to understand the potential impact on one's



well-being, rights, and overall college experience when making decisions about which states to include or exclude from their college list.

Here is an additional resource that you and students can utilize as you gather more information about state policies and their potential impact on college choices:

- The National Conference of State Legislatures offers a comprehensive database of state laws and legislation across various policy areas. Students can access information on reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, firearms regulations, and other relevant topics. <https://www.ncsl.org>

By utilizing these resources and conducting thorough research, students can gain a better understanding of state policies and make informed decisions about which colleges align with their values and priorities. 

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Evaluating Online Courses for Fit

By Michele Evard, PhD, IECA (MA)

Online learning platforms promise convenience, flexibility, and the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects in different formats, but the variety of options and jargon can also be overwhelming. How can students identify a class that will meet their needs? How can IECs help guide families in making appropriate choices? Students, families, school counselors, and IECs need to consider a number of practical and pedagogical factors to determine whether a particular online class would be a good fit for a specific individual student.

Goals for Studying Online

The student must first identify their goal(s) in seeking a way to learn a particular subject, as well as why they want to study it through an online course.

For many students, online courses provide opportunities to take classes that they can't take at their school, whether because the school doesn't offer that class or scheduling conflicts don't allow a student to take a desired course. Similarly, a homeschooled student may seek out online courses for a variety of reasons, including situations in which they don't have a local mentor or group of peers for that particular subject.

Digital educational platforms can also offer options beyond those subjects typically offered in a school curriculum, ranging from essential life skills to the exploration of esoteric and specialized niche topics. Students who want to study at a more advanced level can find college courses online. Those who identify gaps in their knowledge may seek out an online course or tutorial that can help them progress to where they want to be.

The following list of practical issues should be considered when deciding if a particular course might meet a particular student's needs. While some may be addressed by the student and their family, others must be directed to the student's school counselor.

- Is it affordable? If it exceeds the student's budget, is financial aid available?
- Does the student have to apply to take the course? Is admission competitive?
- Does the course have academic prerequisites? Can the student demonstrate that they've met those requirements?

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Michele Evard, Evard Educational Consulting, can be reached at michele@evardconsulting.com.

- Does the student have access to the technology and any other materials required for participation?
- What kind of documentation will be available to show that the student completed the course? Will that meet the student's needs?
- Will the student's current or future school accept the course? Will their school give the student credit toward graduation, or appear on their transcript?
- If the student is seeking credit replacement to improve a previous grade in a similar course, does the school consider this online course as a direct replacement for the previous course?
- Does the student need official approval from their current school before enrolling in the course?

Once it is clear that an online course is possible, there are many other factors to consider.

Digital educational platforms can also offer options beyond those subjects typically offered in a school curriculum, ranging from essential life skills to the exploration of esoteric and specialized niche topics.

Schedules and Pacing

When and how long is the online course available? Are there predetermined dates for turning in work or taking tests, and do those fit the student's schedule? Is the course synchronous, asynchronous, or a hybrid? Knowing the student and the style of the course is critical when deciding if a course will be a good fit.

- Asynchronous courses are generally self-paced, so the student can study and do assignments when and as quickly as they like. Some asynchronous courses have a pre-set schedule of assignments based on when a student begins the course, but students may be able to have that adjusted as needed. This is helpful when a student participates in activities that are seasonal or periodic, as they can take time away from the course when they have competitions or performances. Asynchronous courses often use automated grading systems; they may or may not have the option to speak with a teacher or tutor.
- Synchronous courses often require students to proceed at a predetermined pace that is set by an instructor; attendance at regularly scheduled online meetings is generally required. Class sessions may be lecture-style, but they can also be discussion-based, and students may be required to watch pre-recorded lectures on their own time. These courses often follow a typical academic calendar.
- Hybrid online courses vary in the level of flexibility. They often have fewer class meetings per week, and real-time attendance at such sessions may be optional. Recordings may be available for those students who cannot attend. Students may be able to request flexibility in the pacing of assignments due to outside commitments.

The format can vary by provider or even by course. For example, the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY) offers three formats for their online courses and label them as "session-based," "individually paced," or "LIVE." A student can apply to an individually paced CTY course and start within two weeks; session-based and LIVE courses start on predetermined dates.

Quality and Content

Like anything else online, it can be difficult to assess the quality of a course in advance, especially when some providers share very few details openly. Look for indicators of depth and rigor, including the amount of time expected to complete the course, materials used, and the type and amount of student work expected. If a student has accommodations for school-based courses, it's particularly important to consider what accommodations may be needed or available in the online learning environment. Some providers will share more information on request, but it can be difficult to reach a person who knows course content. To learn about student experiences, try to contact someone who has taken the course, and reach out to IECs whose clients use online courses.

Reviews of courses or teachers can be helpful. Poor ratings are not necessarily an indicator of poor quality, however, since some students object to doing significant work while others seek out challenges and are disappointed in an "easy A" class. Look to see if a negative review includes what in particular was considered objectionable. Reviews and articles about a class or provider may also reveal reports of problems, including recurring technological difficulties, inaccurate course content

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(including answer keys that impact grading), inability to reach a person when an error occurs, poor treatment of students, and biased or hateful course content.

It can also be important to identify the original source of the material for a course. Some providers depend on platforms and courses created by other companies, while others develop their own classes to be able to innovate or follow a particular pedagogical approach. Many states have a public Connections Academy (by Pearson). Private online schools sometimes use multiple providers, while some such as George Washington University Online High School are “Powered by K12” (Stride). Dwight Global Online School has a partnership that allows students to pursue the International Baccalaureate Diploma. Stanford Online High School creates their own courses based on their founding principles. Each of these providers offers some Advanced Placement courses, but the style of the courses vary.

Technology and Pedagogy

Both pedagogy and technology impact the student’s experience in an online course. Some courses are in a traditional lecture style with assignments and tests, while others are project-based, discussion-based, or experiential. Lecture-based courses can be flipped so students watch pre-recorded video lectures and come to live class sessions to discuss what they’ve viewed. Students may be required to produce independent work or group projects.

Adaptive learning technologies improve the educational experiences of a wide variety of students, including those who are advanced, those who have gaps in their knowledge, and those with learning differences. Some courses include a diagnostic pretest that allows the system to assess a student’s readiness and knowledge, and then skip over sections of the material that the student has already mastered. More advanced ed tech will adapt throughout the course, individualizing it for each student. For example, an online algebra course might be similar to a traditional school course: it could require all students to solve many similar problems for each assignment and give the students grades based on how many of the questions they answered correctly on assignments and tests. An algebra course that is adaptive can allow students to proceed more quickly since it can confirm in real time that a student has mastered a concept after answering a few questions. If a student is struggling, however, once they input a wrong answer on one or more problems, such a system could identify if errors are due to a misunderstanding with the current material or due to a gap in previous knowledge, and then provide an opportunity for review of the appropriate material.

Some subjects have a lab or studio component when taught in person; it’s important to know in advance if these aspects of the subject would be included in an online course, and if so, how they are handled. Does the chemistry class have wet labs or only dry labs? Are supplies sent to the home? Are there extra fees? What safety precautions must be observed? Do art courses have a physical studio component or strictly digital? Do students need to pay for specific applications, supplies, or tools? How are performance arts handled?

It’s also important to consider the ease of use of the technology by the student, both for receiving content and doing and submitting their own work. If the material to be learned is presented in a text-heavy fashion, is there also an audio version? When there are lectures or other videos, can

students turn on closed captions, or read a transcript? What style suits the material and the student?

Assignments and Assessments

Online courses may or may not have required work or exams, and may or may not give students grades. Some online educational platforms provide opportunities for a student to do exercises and get immediate feedback on whether they understood and correctly completed the work, while teachers grade student work in other systems.

Providers such as Crash Course or the Great Courses offer many series of video lectures, and students can choose to watch any or all of the videos for a subject. Khan Academy also allows students to choose what lectures to watch; it has exercises for students to complete for practice, and gives automatic feedback as to whether an answer is correct. For each course a student begins at Khan Academy, the percentage of the material mastered is shown.



Massive open online courses (MOOCs) were built to provide free educational content from elite universities to anyone who would like access. Such courses provide all their materials online, including video recordings of lectures by professors, and have varying amounts of work and assessments. Most offer the option to obtain a certificate that shows that a certain percentage of the course material was mastered, but they don’t provide grades or a transcript. Coursera and edX are both well-known MOOC platforms that include rigorous courses from a wide range of respected universities.

Online courses which provide grades may assess students’ learning in a variety of ways. Some require projects or papers that are graded by a teacher, while others rely on students answering questions that can be graded automatically. Some have a final exam that a student must pass to obtain any credit for the course, while others include scores from all work done.

Knowing the student’s goal for taking the course, as well as the type and amount of work required to complete it, can help determine whether a particular course can be completed in the allotted time with the desired results.

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Accreditation and Approval

Some families and some schools prefer online courses from institutions who have been accredited, even though the implementation of accreditation for K-12 institutions is somewhat controversial, not required by law in most states, and not a guarantee of quality. Some online course providers may be in the process of obtaining accreditation, while others have decided that obtaining accreditation would diminish their ability to offer innovative and rigorous courses. The FAQ page of the Lukeion Project provides details about how they conduct their courses and also explains why they have chosen to forgo accreditation. It remains important to know if a student needs to restrict themselves to taking courses from accredited institutions to receive credit for them.

Other institutions may have specific requirements for courses as well. Student-athletes may want courses that have already been approved by the NCAA, and those who want to apply to California public universities should consider if the course has been A-G approved. Scout from the University of California (known as UC Scout) provides many classes that are A-G approved courses; most of the UC Scout on-demand courses are also NCAA-approved. The University of Nebraska High School is an online public high school that offers students the option to enroll in single courses, and provides grades and a transcript. Their catalog indicates on each course description if the course is also "UC A-G Approved" or "NCAA Approved."

Courses that have successfully gone through the College Board's Advanced Placement Course audit process can be labeled "AP" on a high school student's transcript whether or not they were offered by an accredited provider.


Mentorship and Community

Connections to teachers, tutors, mentors, and/or peers form an important part of learning, although it's not always required for each subject a student studies. Online courses may provide or even require such connections, or they may be done individually. Some self-paced courses provide opportunities for asynchronous communication with a tutor or teacher, and some have open office hours where students can join a video conference if they have a question. It's important to consider which environment would best suit a student when they are studying a particular subject. Gifted or advanced students may want the flexibility to go through one subject at an accelerated pace, while they may be seeking peers with whom they can discuss another topic in depth. Similarly, a student may need significant assistance from a specialist in one subject while others are less challenging for them.

Some providers intentionally help students connect with one another, whether during live classes, online clubs, or even periodic in-person special events. For example, the administrators of Dwight Global Online School want students and teachers to get to know one another and have designed their offerings accordingly. They have live synchronous classes in a seminar style, and invite all of their students (part-time and full-time) to participate in virtual clubs as well as to attend residential experiences such as their annual STEAM weekend.

It's important to note that some online course providers require students to have their video cameras on so they are visible to all attendees during live classes, while others allow or even require privacy so students don't necessarily encounter each other even during live sessions.

Readiness

Online courses provide necessary and helpful opportunities for students to learn a wide variety of skills and subjects. No matter how popular or exciting a class is, however, personal considerations remain the most important. When deciding on an online course, a student must consider if they are ready to learn the chosen subject in this format. Do they have the skills to manage their time, prioritize their responsibilities, and balance all of their classes and activities? It's critical to consider whether a desired online course will meet their needs and provide the right kind of environment for them to learn and thrive. 

Disclaimer: Please note that mention of any provider in this article is not an endorsement of their online courses in general or for any individual student.

Try one! If you'd like to try a no-risk online course today, I recommend going to *coursera.org* and searching for "The Science of Well-Being" by Dr. Laurie Santos—there's a version for everyone as well as one that is specific for teens.

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Waitlist Acceptance: Individual Observations or a Trend?

By Qing (Shirley) Xian, MBA, CEP, IECA (MN)

One morning this spring, very early, my phone “dinged” as a message came through and woke me up: “Shirley, I just got admitted by UC Davis from their waitlist.” It was a student who had already decided to go to Macalester College. When he told me that he would go to UCD instead, I felt a bit sad, because this student and Macalester College are a great fit in my heart. At the end of the day, however, I will always choose to support my students’ decisions after sharing my considerations. Then, just a few minutes later, another message came through from a different student: “Shirley, UC Santa Barbara just admitted me from the waitlist, but I have already declined.” With that, I was wide awake.

During every previous application season, almost all my students would receive a couple of waitlist decisions from this or that college, but only a few of them would later get admitted from the waitlist. Sometimes my students chose to hold to their original decisions while other times, they changed their minds. In the last two years, I started to notice a change, at least for my students: there was more acceptance from the waitlist than ever before.

What puzzled me this year is the level and extent of admission from the waitlist that my students have experienced so far. For example, for the student who got admitted to UCSB off the waitlist, that was his fourth admission this season off the waitlist; other offers came from Brandeis, NYU, and the University of Wisconsin Madison. This student has a strong application profile but got waitlisted from all these colleges initially. At the same time, almost all my students this year have similarly received offers from waitlists, and they have changed their minds to accept these admissions. (None of them succeeded during their ED round this year.) My perspective might be biased because I mostly work with international students. My impression and experience this year may not reflect the situation for domestic applicants.

Purely from my students’ experiences, with a very small sample size, the extent of waitlist admission this year did surprise me and make me wonder:

- What has changed?
- Is this a new trend going forward or was it just a random “phenomenon” this year?
- Why?



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Some initial thoughts:

- In recent years, students have tended to apply to more colleges than before; at the end of the day, they can and will only enroll in one college. Colleges may use waitlists more extensively to do enrollment management and later are forced to go deeper into their waitlist to admit students. To be honest, I am not envious of people who are in charge of enrollment management at colleges at this moment.
- The sheer volume of applications for some colleges didn't allow admission staff to look through the details of students' applications.

If waiting for colleges' admission decisions is like riding a rollercoaster, the journey seems to be getting longer (starting earlier and ending later). It can be tiring and stressful for the students and their families. Patience is in higher demand during this journey than ever before. For students and families, it is taking longer to get the complete picture of admission results and figure out where their kids will be heading in the fall.

- After ED acceptance, not all applicants follow the rule and withdraw their RD round applications. Some forget to do so, while others choose not to. They have taken spots at colleges where they definitely will not enroll later. UC campuses are another situation. I had several experiences where after my students made requests to withdraw applications after their ED acceptance, they were still admitted to one or several campuses of the University of California. Given the sheer volume of applications rushing to the UC system and their level of staff in recent years, the situation might be understandable.

Given my limited exposure, I am eager to figure out whether this is only a one-season phenomenon or if it is a new trend in the making.

The landscape of college admission has always been in the process of changing and reshaping itself. More colleges are offering ED2 versus 10 years ago; more colleges are releasing admission decisions earlier vs. toward the end of March; and now, more colleges are accepting more students off waitlist?

If waiting for colleges' admission decisions is like riding a rollercoaster, the journey seems to be getting longer (starting earlier and ending later). It can be tiring and stressful for the students and their families. Patience is in higher demand during this journey than ever before. For students and families, it is taking longer to get the complete picture of admission results and figure out where their kids will be heading in the fall. In turn, as IECs, we may be required to put more effort into counseling and consulting with students and their families to manage expectations and stay patient as we guide them through this journey. 🙌

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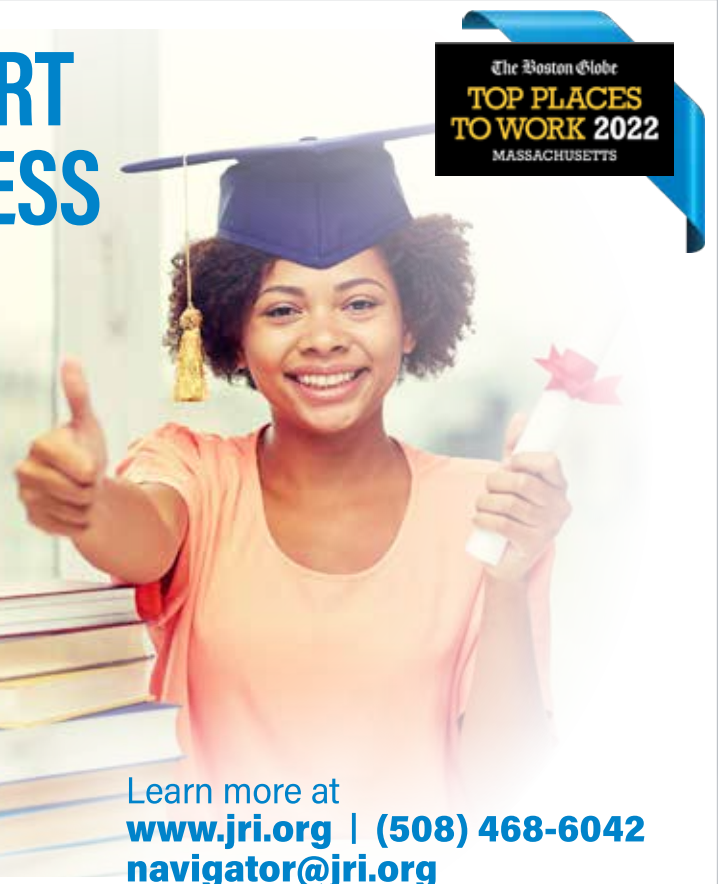
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A Conversation between Michael Treviño and Jeff Levy on the **SCOTUS Affirmative Action Ruling**

This is an edited conversation between Michael Treviño, JD, IECA Associate (CA) and Jeff Levy, CEP, IECA (CA).

Jeff Levy: Michael, can you distill for us what the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action says?

Michael Treviño: At its core, it reverses the precedent set in the 1978 Bakke decision and upheld multiple times by the court since Grutter in 2003 and Fisher in 2016. Each of those decisions upheld the principle that race can be considered, if narrowly tailored and just one of many factors. But now that's no longer the case. While this decision eliminates the use of an applicant's race and ethnicity itself as a factor in college admission decisions, it does hold that colleges can still consider a student's experiences that may be related to their race. Chief Justice Roberts states for the majority that "nothing in this opinion should be construed as prohibiting universities from considering an applicant's discussion of how race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration, or otherwise." But it must be based on a student's experiences, not on the basis of a student's race or ethnic identification alone.

It's important to note that while this is a big decision, the overwhelming majority of colleges admit most of the people that apply. This decision impacts only a relatively small percentage of colleges that are selective. We are talking about maybe 100 colleges that are highly selective, maybe 200 if you extend a little bit to moderately selective. But these are institutions that have a long history of helping prepare students for success, and there's a lot of data about the impact of these institutions on student's lives. There's some great economic data on the impact of attending a selective institution over a student's lifetime in terms of their earnings and their success, and the data from three different economic studies show the impact of attending a selective institution has a much greater impact on underrepresented minority students than white students, as this access is generally unavailable for underrepresented students in what is for them another orbit of social connections and all kinds of other things.

Jeff: But there is something I just don't get about this SCOTUS decision. College admission, in spite of what some may think and what some of the justices imply in their decision, is clearly not a meritocracy. Colleges admit students who help them reach their specific institutional goals—that's how admission works. An applicant from Wyoming, for example, may have an advantage over an applicant from New Jersey simply for geographic diversity. Or a fencer over a non-athlete, an accomplished bassoonist over an accomplished violinist, a legacy applicant over non-legacy, a full-pay applicant over one with financial need, etc. If preferences such as these can be considered as part of the admission process, why can't colleges give a plus to an African American or a Latinx applicant over a White applicant as long as it's one of many factors considered?

Michael: Part of what's happened with the court—and this is where the court has been very split on this—is race and ethnicity is different than playing the bassoon versus the violin. This is where you've even had amicus briefs by organizations who recall discriminatory quotas by colleges against Jews and a history of discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity. The other challenge for colleges is that Harvard and the University of North Carolina, as well as others, have had a difficult time explaining how much use of racial preferences are needed in order to attain a critical mass of underrepresented students.

Also, part of this deliberation in the Supreme Court decision was about "checking the box," as justices in this case had different reactions to an African American or Latino applicant checking a box versus actually sharing their experiences. And that's where the court has come out.

Jeff: There is a carve out where this decision does not apply, correct?



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Michael: Military academies, yes. It's kind of a footnote by Justice Roberts. And what he says about the military academies is that because they were not part of this litigation, they weren't included.

Jeff: In fact, in one of the most quoted lines from Justice Jackson's dissenting opinion, she says, "The Court has come to rest on the bottom-line conclusion that racial diversity in higher education is only worth potentially preserving insofar as it might be needed to prepare Black Americans and other underrepresented minorities for success in the bunker, not the boardroom." A dagger aimed at that carve out?

Michael: Roberts doesn't get into much detail as to why, simply writing "This opinion also does not address the issue, in light of the potentially distinct interests that military academies may present." They have a national interest in reflecting the society as a whole. To which the dissenting opinions point out that these colleges that have ROTC programs also prepare military leaders. And I thought Justice Jackson's line in her dissent was memorable.

Jeff: Michael, you've had extensive experience in these matters as an assistant dean at UC Berkeley starting in 1998, and then later as director of undergraduate admissions for the entire UC system during the aftermath of Prop 209. As a quick refresher for our readers, 209 was a California ballot initiative approved by voters prohibiting state institutions from considering race, gender, or ethnicity. Given the similarities between this new Supreme Court decision and Prop 209, what was its impact on University of California admissions?

Michael: The impact was big in California. It has the largest population in the country, the fifth or sixth largest economy in the world, and is incredibly diverse. And given the demographics of the state that had such a large percentage of non-White, while it wasn't yet the majority of high school graduates, it was a significant share. And what we immediately saw in California was that African American and Latino enrollment fell off a cliff at our most selective campuses, Berkeley and UCLA. The African American student population went from seven or eight percent of the entering class to three percent, less than half of what it was before.

We saw more Black and Latino students and even women in STEM majors at campuses such as Riverside and Santa Cruz, and now also Merced.

Part of the challenge in California is that the UCs are very selective. It's the most selective system of higher ed in the country. What we saw here was a cascading impact on the nine UC campuses, hitting diversity at Berkeley and UCLA hardest. To be eligible for the UC system, a student needed to be in the top eighth, or the top 12.5 percent, of their high school class. When Berkeley and UCLA were enrolling larger numbers of Black and Latino students, these students were of course UC eligible, but after 209, when their race or ethnicity could not be considered, though still UC eligible, the dynamics of admissions at the campuses changed. Before 209, UC had an admissions process that looked primarily at grades and test scores. As strong as these students were, once we were not able to consider their race or ethnicity (or gender for women in STEM fields, where they've been underrepresented), being in the top 12.5 percent of their high school class was not enough for admission into Berkeley, UCLA, or some of the more competitive majors at certain campuses.

So after 209, these students were cascaded down to UC campuses that were less selective. We saw more Black and Latino students and even women in STEM majors at campuses such as Riverside and Santa Cruz, and now also Merced.

It also had a huge impact on the graduate and professional schools. Following 209, for example, the law school at Berkeley had only one African American in the entering class. One, when the year before, we had more than 20. And this African American was a student who had been admitted the year prior and had deferred. If he had not deferred, it would have been zero.

So it was big. The other piece to remember is that the University of California's mission, going back to the 1868 act that established it, is to serve all California communities. When 209 passed, the mission never changed—just the means to get there. So the University of California worked incredibly hard trying to figure out what we could do and what we could change.

And there were a lot of things that had to change. The University of California has spent over half a billion dollars in outreach and recruitment to try to target disadvantaged students starting in the elementary schools to encourage them and help them prepare and apply.

Jeff: The University of California reached into elementary schools?

Michael: Yes. These educational pipeline programs are huge throughout the state of California. Early academic outreach programs help prepare students, partnering with local schools, especially targeting school districts with a high percentage of first-generation, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and English-language learners. And it's a really tough road for a lot of these top students to even think about college if their parent or parents did not attend, or where the primary language spoken at home was not English, or where the family is struggling financially. And the university continues to try to reach these students to prepare them.

Other steps included changing our admissions process so it was more holistic, looking at many more factors, especially looking at context. Our admissions process became better. It took a lot more work, a lot more people, and a lot more resources to change it. But we had to change it to look at the context of where students were coming from and to understand their experience.

Jeff: What else changed?

Michael: The selection criteria, for example, looking at the context of the school to create detailed profiles of each high school in the state of California. We needed to see contextual information, such as how many students are on free and reduced lunch, how many A through G (college prep) courses are offered at that high school, how many Advanced Placement courses are offered at that high school, what are the resources that are available at that high school, etc. Prior to that, when you had a process that looked at GPA, well, if you're at a high school that's highly resourced with lots of advanced placement courses, your GPA, your UC GPA that's weighted and capped, can be quite high compared to students in a low resource school where you may not have the same opportunities to get the bump that raises your GPA. So we changed our process to look more at context in ways that we hadn't before.

Jeff: What about the application itself?

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Michael: We changed the questions to ask about students' experiences because while we are not allowed to consider someone's race, ethnicity or gender, we are allowed to consider their experiences.

Jeff: Is that what the current UC Personal Insight Questions (PIQs) grew out of?

Michael: That was part of it, yes. When I was system-wide director of undergraduate admissions, we began the development of the PIQs. Though we had made a lot of changes since 2009, we were still using the same two essay questions as before. Even though our application materials informed applicants that we considered context as part of our 14 factors, there were still many applicants, especially from underserved populations, that were not addressing context in their essays. We were concerned that students with more resources were providing better written essays than students with fewer resources, especially first-generation college, low-income, and English-language learners, even if their GPAs and courses and everything else they did were remarkable. But they were less likely to have people helping them with their essays. Part of the development of the UC PIQs was a two-year process looking at all the different prompts and essays that were used around the country, along with input from counselors and focus groups at our counselor conferences. Our goal was to develop specific prompts that align with our revised selection criteria that consider a student's challenges and opportunities and what they did with them.

We created eight prompts, with applicants choosing four. We made the word limit shorter—350 words for each response. So applicants now have a direct question allowing them to focus their answers on the information we need. These are not seen as writing samples in the way that college essays are often evaluated. We included among the eight some specific questions that ask students about their experiences, such as how they have worked to overcome an educational barrier, or the most significant challenges they have faced and the steps they took to overcome them. Students don't have to pick those two PIQs, but if there are students who have had some of those challenges, we want to know about their experiences, what happened, and what they did.

Jeff: Fascinating answer. Given this new Supreme Court decision, how might admission policies be impacted across higher education? How do you think institutions will respond?

Michael: Well, I think it's going to be some really interesting times and much of this will depend on the institutions in terms of their mission, priorities, and choices. I think the institutions where diversity is high among their priorities, and that have the resources, are going to be the most responsive to making the changes to their admissions process to minimize the loss of diversity following this Supreme Court decision.

My optimism is based on my experience serving on the faculty of the Harvard Summer Institute of College Admissions with the deans and directors of highly selective colleges, where we regularly discussed our admission processes. I believe they are committed and will make the kinds of decisions necessary to address this challenge at every stage of the admissions process. In admissions we often refer to this as the "admissions funnel." Beginning with outreach and recruitment, they will expand efforts to identify and target high-achieving, underrepresented students.

Colleges will have to look at their applications and the questions they ask, so that applicants discuss if and how "race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration, or otherwise." Colleges will have to look more deeply than they do already at an applicant's high school and the kind of resources and opportunities available. We don't have equality of opportunity in our schools. While the best solution would be for states to invest the resources to provide equal opportunity, until then, colleges will need to put more effort into identifying and selecting high-achieving students who may have had fewer opportunities. I also expect the large percentage of test-optional colleges to remain so and even more join them in becoming test optional.


I can also see colleges considering a student's family income and wealth, as this is a significant predictor of student diversity. Wealth is especially useful because even high income Blacks and Latinos have a fraction of the average wealth of Whites.

I can also see colleges considering a student's family income and wealth, as this is a significant predictor of student diversity. Wealth is especially useful because even high income Blacks and Latinos have a fraction of the average wealth of Whites. Many selective colleges already go beyond FAFSA and require a second form called the CSS Profile to get a more complete picture of a family's assets. Given the relationship between wealth, opportunity, and diversity, I can see an expansion of the use of the CSS Profile and consideration of wealth as another means of objectively assessing opportunity and broadening diversity. Both UCLA Law and UC Davis Medical School have made national news in their effective use of wealth as a race neutral part of their admissions process to successfully increase diversity.

I think colleges may also want to review how they allocate their financial aid, so that it most effectively supports any changes in their admissions process, especially if their strategy includes yielding more students with financial need. Many colleges have increased awarding of "merit" based aid, shifting funds from need-based financial aid to merit-based financial aid. And this merit aid and tuition discounting to kids that don't need it comes out of a financial aid budget that could help underrepresented students who need aid.

Jeff: Finally, how do you think this decision will impact our work as IECs?

Michael: As IECs, we have a duty to help our clients prepare the strongest possible applications to their colleges. If we are working with students of color who are applying to colleges where diversity is an institutional priority, it will be important for us to help them articulate "how race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration, or otherwise," as Chief Justice Roberts stated.

At the selective institutions that are most affected by this decision, an important part of their work is building a diverse class. For students who are not underrepresented, selective colleges will be interested in how they will contribute to diverse communities, including if and how they value students from backgrounds different from their own, and how they demonstrate it through their actions. As we do for all our students, this includes advising and guiding them to present themselves authentically. 



The Wild West of Neuropsychological and Educational Assessments

By Carol A. Kinlan, MEd, MBA, IECA (MA)

As an LD educational consultant, I work with students who have learning or attentional challenges. Most of these students have neuropsychological testing that measures cognitive, academic, and attentional skills. I always ask to review these test reports, and I always brace myself before reading them. Why? While the testing results that I receive are typically based on well-regarded tests (e.g., WISC-V, WIAT, Woodcock-Johnson), they are explained in vastly different ways based on the assessor's training and personal style.

Much like medical tests, such as x-rays or blood work, well-done neuropsychological or educational tests can uncover why a student struggles—and, alternatively, reveal areas of significant strength. When the testing is done well and the report is thoughtfully written, it reads like a well-crafted story. The student comes to life as their strengths and weaknesses are conveyed in meaningful, logical ways. The reader, even without special education training, can learn who this student is as a learner and what type of specific support or remediation would be most beneficial if needed.

Unfortunately, not all assessments fall into this category. Sometimes, I wonder if the person administering the tests truly has their intended audience in mind: namely, the teachers, parents, tutors, and school admission professionals. We know some readers of these reports only glance through key scores and then head to the

summary, while others read every word. In either case, readers can be frustrated if the narrative is too technical or too brief. In general, simply describing what a certain test *measures* is not enough. The reader needs the whole story—specifically, how the student performed the tests.

For instance, sometimes troublingly low scores on key tests are summed up with a quick line such as "lower than expected score." The reader sees the low percentage or standard score and knows the score is concerning. However, they might not know *why*. To illustrate the importance of providing more context regarding the student's performance, consider the processing speed tests (Coding and Symbol Search) on the WISC-V. Low scores on these two subtests could signal a serious lag in how quickly a student can process and "output" information. However, low scores could be due to challenges in fine motor skills or attention, too. The best reports provide a description, in easy-to-understand language, of *how* the student performed the tasks. In this case, did they work too quickly and make careless mistakes (indicating attentional factors) or did they grasp their pencil awkwardly and use great effort to form each symbol? The latter indicates possible fine motor issues. These types of details help inform the reader on what, exactly, made the score low.

I always take a deep breath before looking at the word decoding and passage reading tests, too. It's important



Carol A. Kinlan, Carol Kinlan Consulting, can be reached at ckinlan@gmail.com.

that the tester provide *specific examples* of the types of words or questions that were difficult. Sometimes students read single words and passages quite smoothly but can struggle when asked about what they read. This could signal weak reading and listening comprehension skills. If the student masters inferential or predictive questions but can't recall the main character, that might signal inattention weaknesses.

A higher-than-expected reading comprehension score (when a student's decoding skills are weak) indicates a student who is able to craft a picture in their mind even when having trouble with the actual decoding of words when reading. The tester should indicate something to this effect, not simply make the obvious statement that "passage comprehension was above average."

The Issue with Percentages

Keep in mind that scores in the 15th to 84th percentile will be reported as "average," including low and high average. This is a wide range! Students with scores in the average range, *especially those with high cognitive potential*, may still need support. And, if the student is from a community of highly educated parents, "average" student scores might be closer to 70% or higher. The 50th mid-range is based, as we know, on students from all parts of the US.

Also, on the all-important WISC-V, there can sometimes be concerning percentage differences between the 10 subtests. For example, the student scores in the superior range (91%) in tests of verbal comprehension (VCI), but low average (9%) in tests for processing speed (PSI). It is critical that the student's performance on **both** PSI tests be detailed.

How to Get Better Evaluations

If testing has not been done yet, always ask the neuropsychologist (directly or through your clients) to report, in detail, the type or pattern of errors made by the student. Gently suggest easy-to-understand language when they write up the report—too many technical terms and the benefits of a strong assessment can be lost. Whether the performance is conducted privately or through a public school team, you should request that understandable details of the student's performance be provided. Keep in mind these are professionals, who might bristle if your request is too forceful. It's helpful to provide a specific example from a well-done report of what you are requesting—keeping your tone light and collegial.

If the testing is less than a year old, it can be helpful to contact the neuropsychologist and ask specifically about the student's performance when the scores are lower than expected. The neuropsychologist should have notes from the days of the testing.

For example, with tests that measure *fluency* (timed conditions), you can ask them to report: Was the student slow, but accurate? Inattentive and/or moving too quickly? Also, if processing speed might be a concern, they should use testing that measures speed of processing, not using a pencil. This could help determine if the slow speed is due to weaker output versus poor fine-motor skills.

For tests of *decoding and reading comprehension*: If a student gets lower-than-expected scores on decoding or passage reading, you need to know exactly why.

Neuropsychological Evaluation Examples

Example of well-documented reading test

GORT-5 (Gray Oral Reading Test): Student Jane Smith

- Reading Rate: 8 (25%)
- Reading Accuracy: 7 (16%)
- Reading Fluency: 8 (25%)
- Comprehension: 11 (63rd)

"Results of the GORT-5 indicated that when Jane was asked to read the test aloud, her rate and accuracy was found to be significantly below estimated potential and current grade level. Errors found included simple substitutions (e.g., "the" for 'a'); misreading familiar sight words (e.g., "car" for 'cat'; "there" for 'that') and guessing based on initial letters (e.g., "found" for 'flown) and difficult decoding ("gran" for 'garnered'). Jane's higher comprehension score suggests a natural ability to glean meaning of verbal information despite reading challenges."

Example of a poorly documented reading test


GORT-5 (Gray Oral Reading Test): Student Jill Smith

- Reading Rate: 8 (25%)
- Reading Accuracy: 7 (16%)
- Reading Fluency: 8 (25%)
- Comprehension: 11 (63rd)

"Results of the GORT-5 indicated largely average reading fluency scores (rate and accuracy) notable for some misreads. Jill's comprehension score was at the 63rd percentile, falling in the average range."

Here are some reasons for lower-than-expected reading scores:

- **Poor accuracy (decoding) skills:** trouble accurately reading words. You need to know exactly what was inaccurate (e.g., phonological or words that follow no rules, "cattle" for castle, "none" for known).
- **Weak "fluency" skills:** the student reads the words accurately but has a very slow reading pace.
- **Poor accuracy and fluency:** both accuracy and rate of decoding are compromised; this is sometimes referred to as double-deficit dyslexia syndrome.
- **Poor attentional skills:** the student misreads or skips smaller words or skips sentences.
- **Weak ocular-motor skills:** rare but usually due to a lack of convergence when the eyes must coordinate left-to-right reading.

A Boston-based school admissions director recently told me she was troubled by the "bad" testing she was seeing from potential candidates. These reports didn't allow her team to clearly understand the student's strengths and weaknesses. Thus, if they accepted the student, they were unsure what type of specific support was needed. A simple request for more detailed reporting in non-technical language can make for very insightful and valuable reporting. It can make all the difference in helping meet each student's learning needs. 



Why I Belong

Features, Benefits, and Fulfillment

By Mindy Peterson, MBA, IECA (CA)

In the fall of 2017, I attended my first IECA conference as a Student member in Washington DC. My perspective on my new profession radically shifted on the first day there, at a pre-conference workshop on the business of independent educational consulting. As a UCLA college counseling certificate program student, I was learning about the features of the services I would provide to clients. My focus was on communicating these features to build my fledgling business. But in the pre-con, a novel (to me) idea was proposed by Brooke Daly—that instead of highlighting features, we IECs should focus on the benefits we provide. This simple concept was a revelation to me.



From that moment, I began to think of my role as an IEC in a completely new way and changed my behavior accordingly. In initial consultations, I shifted from talking about my services to listening carefully to potential clients and understanding their pain points. I changed the focus of email communications to meeting clients' needs. In student meetings, I kept the focus on students' goals and dreams, ensuring their buy-in to our work together. Even my new website would reflect this 180-degree rotation in my approach.

When I joined IECA early in my certificate program, I was drawn by the features: discounts on my UCLA classes, use of the IECA logo and brochures, and reduced fees for conferences. However, after launching my LLC and stepping up to Associate membership in 2018, the benefits, both personal and professional, were what drew me to become more involved in IECA.

At that same pre-con workshop in 2017, feeling extreme imposter syndrome, I had nervously asked one of the hundreds of unfamiliar IECs if I could join her at her table. Instead of rejecting me for not yet being a working IEC, she smiled and warmly welcomed me. We quickly learned that we lived in adjoining cities and were familiar with the same high schools. She became my first mentor and we met up back home and at subsequent conferences. The benefits of mentorship became increasingly apparent when I was setting my consulting fees and encountering unexpected problems with my initial clients and pro bono students.


The vastness of IECA's benefits became more apparent to me when I attended the 2018 Summer Training Institute (STI) at Claremont McKenna College. While my certificate program had prepared me to counsel students on the college application process, it was STI that prepared me to launch a successful business right from the outset. Creating both a business plan and a marketing plan gave me the confidence to announce myself as a small business owner in my community. Learning how to build a college list from the ultimate expert, Steven Antonoff, filled in a critical missing piece from my certificate classes. Networking, learning, and socializing with my STI peers revealed that I could have community and support as a solopreneur.

When I attended additional conferences, I found myself growing as a professional. The opportunities for continuous learning were intoxicating. However, when I learned that a great number of college tours were required for higher levels of membership, I initially considered the stipulation to be a burden, and worried about the time and money it would require. However, as I participated in pre- and post-conference tours in 2018 and joined the 2019 Northwest College Tour, it became clear that the benefits of visiting colleges alongside knowledgeable colleagues far outweighed my investment. I listened to their challenging and insightful questions and the answers allowed me to see beyond the veneer presented by practiced admissions officers. Understanding colleges' strengths and weaknesses at a deeper level has greatly benefitted my list-building abilities, allowing me to better gauge academic, social, and financial fit for my clients.

From that moment, I began to think of my role as an IEC in a completely new way and changed my behavior accordingly.

Although I was soaking up all of the benefits that IECA had to offer me as a newer member, I wasn't yet aware of the great fulfillment that membership could provide. I got my first glimpse when I was asked to monitor a tour bus during post-conference tours at the IECA 2018 Spring Conference in Chicago. As I checked other IECs on and off the bus at the University of Chicago, I realized that even a less experienced IEC like myself could take on a helpful role and that my efforts made a difference to others' enjoyment of the college tour. My worldview shifted again.

Last year, I was tapped to join the IECA Outreach Committee, and was excited to join a group of IECs who were passionate about sharing the benefits of IECA with potential members. Though new on the committee, I saw an opportunity to increase IECA's outreach to UC certificate program students. My committee chair was open to new ideas, allowing me to feel comfortable sharing my thoughts. I was thrilled to learn that she also thought that the UC programs were an untapped market for new members. Our committee launched the UC Happy Hour outreach program this January, receiving over 70 RSVPs from UC certificate program students. Several of the attendees applied for membership following the virtual meeting. Due to this initial success, our committee is planning semiannual UC Happy Hours. While planning and implementing the event required a surprising amount of time and effort, it was extremely gratifying to play a role in the growth of IECA.

My experience as an IECA volunteer and committee member gave me the confidence to apply for Professional membership last December. As my experience with IECA has expanded from features to benefits to fulfillment, my gratitude for the organization has bloomed. It's why I belong. 

Mindy Peterson, CollegeNod, LLC, can be reached at mindy@collegenod.co.

In the News

Amy Jasper (VA) and **Alex Trefftz** (Associate, VA) were quoted in the *Washington Post* article, “The affirmative action ruling has already upended college applications” on June 29, 2023.

Eva Garza-Nyer (TX) was quoted in “Four things students need to know after the Supreme Court ruled against affirmative action” in *NBCNews.com* on June 29, 2023.

Jill Madenberg (NY) was interviewed for a segment about postsecondary options on *Good Morning America* on April 29, 2023.

Stephanie Klein Wassink (CT) was quoted in “9 College Application Tasks for the Summer Before Senior Year” in *US News & World Report* on May 12, 2023.

Jenny Buyens (MN) was quoted in “Reputation, Affordability, Location, and...Mental Health?” in *Inside Higher Ed* on June 6, 2023.

Jeff Levy (CA) was quoted in “These are the highest-paying college majors, four years after graduation—many pay over \$100,000” on *CNBC.com* on May 16, 2023.

Valeria Avirett (FL) was quoted in “The 10 most prestigious private preschools in Miami — and how to get in” in *Business Insider* on April 19, 2023.

Sharon Decker (Associate, NY) was quoted in “How to Find the Right K-12 School for Your Child” in *US News & World Report* on March 6, 2023.

Maurice Frumkin (Associate, NY) was quoted in “How to Get into a Competitive High School” in *US News & World Report* on March 30, 2023.

Pierre Huguet (Associate, MA) was quoted in “10 Things to Consider When Choosing a High School” in *US News & World Report* on April 27, 2023 and in “Six expert tips to pay less for college in 2023 and beyond” in *Business Insider* on May 17, 2023.

Ethan Sawyer (CA) was referenced in “Six free college and career planning resources for students and their families” in the *Union* on April 20, 2023.

Laurie Weingarten (NJ) and **Robert Kohen** (Associate, NY) were quoted in “What is ‘Ivy Day’? Your guide to elite college admissions’ big day,” in the *New York Post* on March 29, 2023. Kohen weighed in on the merits and potential disadvantages of taking a gap year in “Why High School Graduates Should Consider a Gap Year” in *Forbes* on May 26, 2023. Weingarten was also quoted in “‘Ivy Day’ 2023 results are in: Ivy League acceptance rates set record low,” in the *New York Post* on March 31, 2023; “‘On its last legs’: How Penn is quietly refining its legacy admission policy” in the *Daily Pennsylvanian* on March 22, 2023; “Legacy admissions for alumni children: the beginning of the end?” in *Times Higher Education* on April 11, 2023; and “Athletic Scholarships Aren’t Enough to Pay for College” in *Forbes* on May 22, 2023.

Dale Price's (Associate, TX) article, “ChatGPT won’t necessarily help you get into the school of your choice,” was published in the *Austin American-Statesman* on April 19, 2023.

Jennifer Curtis (CA) was interviewed for a segment about college admission trends on KCRA Channel 3 on March 22, 2023 and for a segment on urging families to avoid the word ‘rejection’ during college admission season on March 29, 2023.

IECA was referenced in “Choosing the Best School for Your Child: Everything You Need to Know” in the *Tech Advocate* on March 27, 2023; “How to Find the Right College Counselor for Your Needs” in *Publicist Paper* on May 17, 2023; and “Why I Kidnapped My Daughter: Sometimes the most radical action is the only way out” in *Psychology Today* on April 8, 2023.

Dana Rolander (OH) and **Abigail Whited** (Associate, OH) were quoted in the June 20 *Cincinnati* magazine article “Get an Expert Opinion on the Daunting College Application Process.”

Joanne LaSpina (PA) was featured on the May 2, 2023 *Legacy Listens* podcast episode, “What Should You Be Thinking About During Your Child’s College Search Process?”

Kathie Carnahan (NC) and **Sarah Pottharst Girolami** (LA) were featured in “A Family Affair” in *New Orleans* magazine on May 1, 2023. 

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

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IECA Foundation's Charting the Future Event

at the IECA 2023 Spring Conference | Seattle, WA | May 8, 2023

Thank you to everyone who attended our Charting the Future Reception! All proceeds from this event went to our Annual Fund, which enables us to continue to help underserved students map pathways to success!



Special thanks to our incredible sponsors:



Announcing the IECA Foundation's 2023 Microgrant Recipients

The IECA Foundation seeks to highlight the work that IECA members do by awarding \$2,000 microgrants to five organizations that align with our mission—organizations where consultants have had an ongoing relationship serving young people as they move forward in their education.

The following organizations are near and dear to the hearts of the IECA members who support them through volunteer work. These organizations and the IECA members who nominated them were announced on May 10, 2023 at the IECA Spring Conference in Seattle by IECA Foundation Board Chair Ann Rossbach.

AXS Foundation

Nominated by: Jeff Levy, Marilyn O'Toole, and Jennie Kent
www.theaxsfoundation.org

Minds Matter Seattle - Seattle, WA

Nominated by: Ashley Dixon
<https://mindsmatterseattle.org>

More Than Bootstraps - Westfield, NJ

Nominated by: Ricardo Ortegón
www.morethanbootstraps.org

Moxie Mentoring Foundation - Brightwaters, NY

Nominated by: Terry Mady-Grove
www.moxiementoring.org

Santa Clara County Alliance of Black Educators - San Jose, CA

Nominated by: Antoinette Battiste
www.sccabe.org

Campus Visits

Right: In April 2023, seven members from College Connectors toured 12 colleges in Upstate New York, including Binghamton University.

Below: IECA members toured colleges, schools, and programs in WA, OR, and British Columbia before and after the IECA 2023 Spring Conference in Seattle.



Colleges, schools, and programs: If you would like to invite IECA members to participate in announced in-person or virtual campus tours, contact IECA Member Experience Manager Tanesha Norman at Tanesha@IECAonline.com.



Introductions

Please Welcome IECA's New Professional Members



Dafna Adler (CA) has worked as a high school counselor for almost 20 years and became an IEC five years ago, pursuing her passion for working with students applying to international universities.

A member of IACAC, she holds an MA in counseling psychology from the University of San Francisco and a BA from Mills College, including one year studying abroad in Paris.

Dafna Adler, MA
Wanderlust College Counseling
San Francisco, CA 94107
415-851-5580
dafna@wanderlustcollegecounseling.com
wanderlustcollegecounseling.com
Specialty: C



Michelle Alessandria (CA) has been an IEC for five years, following a 30-year teaching career. She holds a master's degree in education and multiple teaching credentials from St.

Mary's College and San Francisco State University. Alessandria is a member of WACAC.

Michelle Alessandria, MEd
OPEN EDvantage
Lafayette, CA 94549
925-963-0883
michelle@open-edvantage.com
open-edvantage.com
Specialty: C



Stephanie Frumkin (MD), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for five years and has 25 years of education experience, teaching in public, private, and international

schools, homeschool co-ops, and community colleges. Frumkin attended IECA's 2021 Summer Training Institute and holds an MA in leadership in teaching.

Stephanie Frumkin, MA Ed
Exceptional Educational Solutions
Silver Spring, MD 20902
724-320-9026
stephanie@exceptionaleducationalsolutions.com
exceptionaleducationalsolutions.com
Specialty: S (+LD)



Lynne Fuller (PA) is a highly creative and results-driven public and independent school leader who possesses an entrepreneurial spirit, postsecondary vision, and commitment to students'

life journeys. With more than 24 years of experience leading, developing, and supporting students' secondary and postsecondary educational and career planning, Fuller is dedicated to matching students' gifts with career pathways that embrace growth mindset and fulfill life goals.

Lynne Fuller, MA
Fuller Experience Academic Tutoring & College Flight Path
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
856-220-1484
lynne.m.fuller@gmail.com
collegeflightpath.com
Specialties: C (+LD), S (+LD), T (+LD)



Gilbert Guo (CO), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for three years. A graduate of UConn, he has a TESOL Teaching Certificate and taught IB English in Shanghai, China for two

years. Upon returning to the US, he earned a College Counseling Certificate from UCLA Extension. Guo previously served as a high school basketball coach in Connecticut for four years.

Gilbert Guo
College Matters, LLC
Denver, CO 80202
203-245-1712
guo@college-matters.com
college-matters.com
Specialty: C



Lauren Klentak (NJ), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for five years. She has held roles in career services and student affairs at Johns Hopkins, Cal State Fullerton,

and Chapman. Klentak earned an MA from Columbia University Teachers College, a BA from Dartmouth, and a College Counseling Certificate from UCLA Extension.

Lauren Klentak, MA
Ignite College and Career Consulting
Haddonfield, NJ 08033
617-823-2255
ignitecollegeconsulting@gmail.com
ignitecollegeconsulting.com
Specialty: C



Jennifer MacLure (CA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for 10 years, following work as director of counseling at Army and Navy Academy. A Nationally Certified Counselor, she holds a

master's in counseling from the University of San Diego and a College Counseling Certificate from UCSD Extension. She organizes a pre-college program each summer and volunteers with Teen Volunteers In Action.

*Jennifer MacLure, MA
My Pathway to College
Encinitas, CA 92024
760-579-3820
info@mypathwaytocollege.com
mypathwaytocollege.com
Specialty: C*



Stephanie Mitchell (CT), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for three years, following 12 years as director of college placement and transition planning for a private school serving LD/

ND students. She holds an MA in art history from Syracuse University and a BA from St. Olaf College. An attendee of IECA's 2020 Summer Training Institute, she is also a member of NACAC.

*Stephanie Mitchell, MA
Grapevine Educational Consulting
Wilton, CT 06897
203-233-6787
grapevineeducationalconsulting@gmail.com
grapevineeducationalconsulting.com
Specialty: C*



Robert Powers (CA) specializes in guiding LGBTQ+ students find their safe, supportive, happy campuses. He earned concurrent BA and MA degrees from Johns Hopkins, has served

on the reading committee for the Coca-Cola Scholarship, and is currently the founder of College Torch in Sierra Madre, CA.

*Robert Powers, MA
College Torch
Sierra Madre, CA 91024
323-487-9747
robert@collegetorch.com
collegetorch.com
Specialty: C*



Gabriel Solorzano (FL) has diverse experience in microfinance, banking, and hospitality, and has been an IEC for eight years. He earned an MBA from INCAE Business School and

a BS from Texas A&M and participated in Harvard's Executive Program on Banking for Micro Enterprises. He is the president of Transparency International and the founder/president of Home of Hope, a shelter for children with cancer.

*Gabriel Solorzano, MBA
College Prep Master
Miami, FL 33129
786-502-0001
gabriel@collegeprepmaster.com
collegeprepmaster.com
Specialty: C (+I)*



Barbara (Barb) Stager (CO), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for four years. She has a BS with an emphasis in accounting and worked as a CPA prior to raising her family. She

earned a Certificate in College Counseling with Distinction from UCLA Extension and is a member of NACAC and RMACAC. Stager volunteers as the treasurer for the Niwot High School Education Foundation.

*Barbara (Barb) Stager
Admissions Logic College Consulting, LLC
Niwot, CO 80503
303-877-8187
barb@admissionslogic.com
admissionslogic.com
Specialty: C*



Katherine (Katie) Thatcher (MA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for six years, following 20 years working in Boston law firms and the Offices

of Career Services at Harvard Law School and Northeastern University School of Law. She holds a JD from Northeastern University and BA from Carleton College. A member of NEACAC, Thatcher volunteers with Transitioning Together, a first-gen mentoring program.

*Katherine (Katie) Thatcher, JD
ThriveAdmission
Newton, MA 02461
617-322-5220
kat@thriveadmission.com
thriveadmission.com
Specialty: C*

Initiatives



◀ **Antoinette Battiste** (CA) was honored as the 2023 Woman of the Year in Education by the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Silicon Valley Chapter at their April 30 event.

Congratulations to **Shereem Herndon-Brown** (MD) on receiving NACAC's 2023 John B. Muir Editor Award, along with his co-author and co-host Tim Fields. Herndon-Brown is the author of *A Black Family's Guide to College Admission*.

Congratulations to **Brooke Daly** (NC), whose company, Advantage College Planning, was recognized as Cary Chamber of Commerce's 2023 Employer of the Year during their event on May 16.



◀ **Betsy Morgan** (CT) and **Colleen Paparella** (VA) were selected to participate in the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program. The 12-week program concluded with a week at Goldman Sachs' headquarters in New York City.



▲ On April 19, IECA's CEO, **Mark Sklarow** and IECA members **Anne Holmdahl** (WA) and **Jeana Kawamura** (CA), plus Nate Mannerter from Gonzaga University and Michel Ouert from Montana State University, presented "Colleges and Independent Educational Consultants: Effective Communication for Student Success" at the 2023 ACAC SuperConference in Spokane, Washington.

On April 11, **Carolyn Mulligan** (NJ) presented a virtual workshop on "Writing the College Essay" to the Summit, New Jersey YMCA Achievers group. This is the second year that she has done so. 🙌

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Spotlight on the Students Crossing Borders Affinity Group


By Teo Salgado, MA, IECA Associate (Canada)

Navigating the ever-evolving landscape of international education can be a challenging task for independent educational consultants (IECs) working with students crossing borders. To address this need for specialized support, IECA established the Students Crossing Borders Affinity Group, a vibrant community aimed at assisting consultants in their work with students seeking global higher education opportunities.

The primary purpose of the Students Crossing Borders Affinity Group is to foster a supportive community where IECs can share knowledge, resources, and best practices. Through regular meetings, webinars, and workshops, the group offers opportunities for professional development, enabling consultants to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and developments in the field of international higher education.

One of the key benefits of the affinity group is its focus on elevating consultants' knowledge of international higher education options. Through specialized programs and training, consultants gain a deeper understanding of the diverse educational systems, admission requirements, and cultural nuances associated with various countries. This enhanced expertise enables consultants to provide more comprehensive guidance and support to students pursuing educational opportunities abroad.

Furthermore, the Students Crossing Borders Affinity Group emphasizes the importance of peer-to-peer collaboration and resource sharing. Consultants within the group actively exchange valuable insights, strategies, and tools they have found successful in their work. This cooperative approach fosters a spirit of collective growth and ensures that members have access to a wealth of firsthand experiences and expertise.

By providing a community of support and continuous professional development opportunities, the Students Crossing Borders Affinity Group empowers IECs to better serve students embarking on international educational journeys. Through knowledge sharing and collaboration, the group helps consultants navigate the complexities of international higher education, expanding opportunities for students to thrive in a globalized world. 

To join the Students Crossing Borders Affinity Group, go to: network.IECAonline.com/communities/affinitygroups

Connect with Colleagues in an IECA Affinity Group

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

To join an existing Affinity Group on the Member Network, go to: network.IECAonline.com/communities/affinitygroups

To create a new Affinity Group, contact Tanesha Norman, IECA's member experience manager, at Tanesha@IECAonline.com.

NEW GROUPS!

IECs Serving Families of Active Christian Faith

This group is designed to support, educate, and encourage IECs who serve, or want to serve, students and families who practice the Christian faith in its many forms or who are interested in a Christian faith-based learning environment. Group members do not have to be practicing Christians themselves. Coordinators: Andrea Caserta (andreacinct@gmail.com) and Anne Heine (anne@collegemadeclear.com)

College Affordability

This group focuses on creating a safe space for consultants to share questions, best practices, and resources on college affordability. Coordinators: Liz Agather (path4u2college@gmail.com) and Donna Sakabu (donna@insightfulcollegeplanning.com)



Teo Salgado, VerveSmith, Ltd., can be reached at teo.salgado@vervesmith.com.

Regional Groups

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

To get involved in an existing group, join their community on the Member Network: network.IECAonline.com/communities/regionalgroups

To start a group in your area, contact Tanesha Norman, IECA's member experience manager, at Tanesha@IECAonline.com.



In April 2023, members of the **Broward/Palm Beach IECA Regional Group** visited the University of North Florida and gathered at the SACAC Conference.



After two years of meeting via Zoom, the **Minnesota Regional Group** met in person in April 2023.



On May 2, 2023, members of the **Connecticut Regional Group** enjoyed a tour of Sacred Heart University.



Members of the **Central Florida Regional Group** convened at the IECA Spring Conference in Seattle, WA in May 2023.



The **Philadelphia Regional Group** staffed a Counselor's Corner at the Main Line College Fair held at Villanova University on May 24, 2023.



The **College Consultants of Colorado Regional Group** enjoyed a hike together at Chautauqua Park, outside of Boulder, in May 2023.

The **Greater Los Angeles Regional Group** meeting on June 2, 2023 focused on ChatGPT. Mark Cruver was our guest speaker and showed us how to use this tool to organize our incoming and outgoing resources, reduce clutter, and create valuable communication with our students. The group also had two in-person tours: Arizona State University – Los Angeles on June 29, 2023 and Emerson College, Los Angeles Center, on July 27, 2023. For information on upcoming events, please join the group's IECA Member Network community. Questions? Contact Co-Chair Robert Powers (robert@collegetorch.com).

For Schools, Colleges, and Program Representatives

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

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