



IECA<sup>+</sup>  
INSIGHTS

THE JOURNAL OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

Fall 2023

# Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety in the Application Process

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## IECA<sup>+</sup> INSIGHTS

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## President's Letter

# Changes to Support Our Members' Needs

As we embark on an exciting journey of change and growth, IECA has been committed to providing unparalleled education and support to our members in the field of independent educational consulting. As we look forward to 2024 and beyond, I am thrilled to announce a significant shift in our conference format and numerous new initiatives that will elevate your experience as an IECA member.

### A Bold Shift in Conference Format

Starting in 2024, IECA will transition from hosting two conferences a year (fall and spring) to a single, larger, and more impactful conference held in the spring. This decision was driven by our commitment to delivering the highest value and relevance to our members. Consolidating our conferences will

enable us to focus our resources and efforts on creating a truly exceptional experience while ensuring specialty-driven programming is created to supplement your specific educational needs.

### One Conference, Bigger and Better

The single annual conference will be a comprehensive event that is not just bigger, but better in every way. It will allow for more in-depth sessions and greater opportunities to learn, connect, and network with fellow IECs, schools, colleges, and programs. This consolidation will result in a more concentrated and dynamic gathering that fosters meaningful interactions, deeper engagement, and a more profound sense of community. Our 2023 fall conference in Tampa will serve as the last one of its kind within



Ibrahim Firat

that time frame, while our next conference, in Connecticut from May 6-8, 2024, will serve as the new and first annual conference for IECA.

### New Educational Programming

Those of you who are two-conference goers may feel the void—I hear you because I am one of you. You may ask yourself, “Will I be missing out on the opportunity to reconnect with my colleagues, learn, and network?” The answer is, “We thought about that!” We are excited to introduce an array of new educational programming that caters to your diverse needs and interests. Whether you specialize in college counseling, schools, therapeutic placements, graduate schools, or

*continued on page 6*

## In Focus



IECA's membership has more than **tripled** in the last 10 years, with over **2,800 members today**.

IECA's college consultant membership is **three times** that of any other IEC organization.

The average student to IECA member ratio is **24:1**.

In **public schools**, there is a ratio of **408:1** student to counselor (*source: American School Counselor Association*).

IECA members spend an average of **38%** of their time on **research and campus visits**.

Students who work with an IECA member are **3½** times more likely to attend **private college** and are **3** times more likely to attend an **out-of-state college**.

*This information is available in our newly updated flyer, The Role of Independent Educational Consultants in College Admissions. To order print copies or download the PDF, visit our website: [link.IECAonline.com/marketing](http://link.IECAonline.com/marketing)*

# Submit Your Proposal for IECA's 2024 Conference

**Deadline: January 8, 2024**

Share your knowledge with your colleagues! Submit a session proposal for the IECA Annual Conference, May 6-8, 2024 at the Mohegan Sun Resort in Uncasville, Connecticut.

We accept proposals for breakouts, pre-conference workshops, and more.

The proposal deadline is January 8, 2024. For more information, visit our website: [link.IECAonline.com/present](http://link.IECAonline.com/present)



## IECA Professional Member Business Forum

January 25-26, 2024 | Virtual

Block out your calendar now and plan to join us online for this annual event, designed to address the needs of members with at least five years working in the profession. The presentations and guest speakers are appropriate for IECs practicing in all specialty areas. Share your best ideas with colleagues, engage in group discussions, and learn from topic-focused presentations—all from the comfort of your own home! Learn more and register online: [link.IECAonline.com/business-forum](http://link.IECAonline.com/business-forum)



**New name; same great event! The annual Retreat is now the Professional Member Business Forum.**

## IECA Events Calendar

For the most up-to-date calendar of upcoming events, visit the IECA Member Network: [network.IECAonline.com](http://network.IECAonline.com)

To watch recordings of College Conversations and other webinars, visit the IECA website: [link.IECAonline.com/webinars](http://link.IECAonline.com/webinars)



### President's Letter, from page 4

international education, we have curated specialized content for you. This programming will encompass in-person and virtual sessions, allowing you to choose the format that best suits your learning style and schedule. They may not be in the grandiose scale you're used to from a national conference, but they will provide you with the educational depth and breadth and connection with fellow IECs, schools, colleges, and programs that you would experience in a conference setting.

### Continuing to Excel in Education and Training

Rest assured that while we are introducing these changes, we remain steadfast in our commitment to excellence in education and training. Our focus on delivering high-quality, relevant, and up-to-date content will continue to be at the core of our mission and strategic plan. We understand the importance of staying at the forefront of industry trends, and our revamped conference will reflect this commitment.

### Tailored Tours and Partnerships

In addition to our conference changes, we are thrilled to announce an innovative approach to tours. These tours will not only be organized by geography but will also be tailored to meet the specific demands and interests of our members. Depending on your specialty or sub-specialty, you will soon find designated tours for those specific needs.

Furthermore, IECA is actively pursuing new partnerships and collaborations with various institutions, both in person and virtual. These partnerships will pave the way for special educational programming that offers unique insights and opportunities for our members. These initiatives will provide you with access to the latest information and resources, ensuring that you are well-equipped to excel in your roles as IECs.

### A Bright Future Ahead

As we embrace these changes and embark on this exciting journey, we do so with a profound sense of optimism and commitment to the continued growth and success of our profession. The IECA community is defined by its dedication, passion, and drive to make a positive impact on the lives of students and families. These changes reflect our unwavering commitment to providing you with the best resources, education, and support for your work as an IEC.

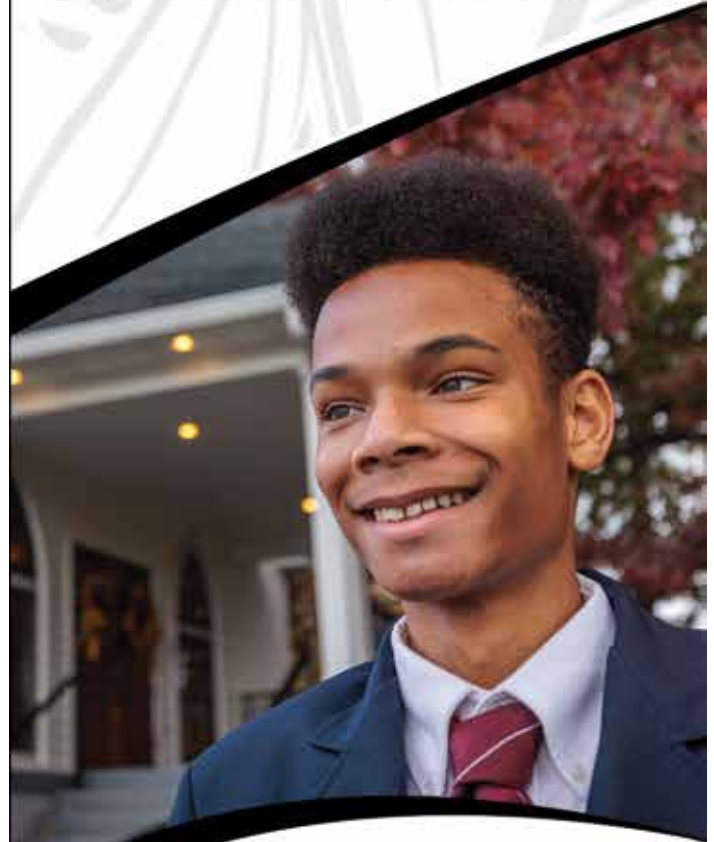
The transition to one annual conference, the introduction of specialized programming, tailored tours, and strategic partnerships herald an exciting era of growth and innovation for IECA. We are confident that these changes will elevate your experience as an IECA member and empower you to thrive in the ever-evolving field of independent educational consulting.

Together, we will continue to shape the future of independent educational consulting and make a meaningful difference in the lives of the individuals and families we serve.



Ibrahim Firat, MBA  
IECA President

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# Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety in the Application Process

By Joanna Lilley, MA, NCC, IECA (MI) and Adrienne N. Frumberg, MA, IECA (CT)

Students are struggling not just to meet deadlines for essay drafts and letter of recommendation requests, but to even get started. Independent educational consultants (IECs) are faced with the task of decreasing the burden of the admissions application stress for students, but even with a reduction, we're still befuddled. We are frustrated by some students' lack of communication, motivation, and drive. Confused as to how to help? We need to look at the root of what's really going on.

The eight percent decline in higher education enrollment ([link.IECAonline.com/declining-college-interest](http://link.IECAonline.com/declining-college-interest)) isn't decreasing the demand for IECs. For students applying, we are actually seeing a spike in the quantity of applications, particularly in "reach" colleges. Anxiety in high school seniors is at an all-time high. College-bound students are following checklists, balancing schoolwork, and being pressured to stand out in a more diverse student body than ever. The stress of it all is taking a toll on our students, and on us. In this article, we look ahead to better understand what anxiety actually looks like in an effort to better support the students we are helping.

## What Anxiety Can Look Like during the College Application Process

"Rose" is a current junior at a small boarding school in Connecticut. She spent three months during spring of her sophomore year being treated for her

anxiety disorder. During junior year, Rose spent her time adjusting to her new school, getting involved in activities, and engaging in community service, and felt like college was in the distant future. She started visiting colleges last May and honed in on a college list of small, mostly liberal arts colleges.

Typically the summer before senior year, most students complete as much as they can of the application and essay. Rose, however, became increasingly disengaged from the process, missing meetings, responding to messages days later, and refusing to begin outlining her main college essay. Excuses piled up, and before she knew it, the time came for her to return for her senior year of high school, the main essay not completed, SAT test scheduled for later in the fall, and a number of supplemental questions to complete.

As her college counselor, I'm concerned about her anxiety disorder flaring up due to the stress of the college application process and looming list of to-do list items. The goal is for students to work on college application tasks the summer before senior year; this can lower stress when schoolwork begins to pile up again during senior year. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case with Rose.

From a non-clinical perspective, here are some signs of what we might identify as an "anxious student," or behaviors we may mistake for not relating to anxiety:

*continued on page 9*



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*Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety, from page 7*

- Restlessness or fatigue
- Impaired concentration and/or responding with “I don’t know” to any question
- Irritability, usually directed toward parents (and possibly not observed by the IEC until it’s at a breaking point)
- Difficulty sleeping because they are overwhelmed, and their mind is racing
- Avoidance in responding to communication, task deadlines, and anything that requires a decision

## Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Here is the clinical criteria for a Generalized Anxiety Disorder (ICD-10) from the National Institute of Mental Health ([link.IECAonline.com/generalized-anxiety-disorder](http://link.IECAonline.com/generalized-anxiety-disorder)):

- A) A period of at least six months with prominent tension, worry, and feelings of apprehension about everyday events and problems
- B) At least four symptoms out of the following list of items must be present, of which at least one from items 1-4

*Autonomic arousal symptoms:*

1. palpitations or pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate
2. sweating
3. trembling or shaking
4. dry mouth (not owing to medication or dehydration)

*Symptoms concerning chest and abdomen:*

5. difficulty breathing
6. feeling of choking
7. chest pain or discomfort
8. nausea or abdominal distress (e.g., churning in stomach)

*Symptoms concerning brain and mind:*

9. feeling dizzy, unsteady, faint, or light-headed
10. feelings that objects are unreal (derealization), or that one’s self is distant or “not really here” (depersonalization)
11. fear of losing control, going crazy, or passing out
12. fear of dying

*General symptoms:*

13. hot flushes or cold chills
14. numbness or tingling sensations


*Symptoms of tension:*

15. muscle tension, or aches and pains
16. restlessness and inability to relax
17. feeling keyed up, or on edge, or of mental tension
18. a sensation of a lump in the throat, or difficulty with swallowing

*Other nonspecific symptoms:*

19. exaggerated response to minor surprises or being startled
20. difficulty in concentrating, or mind going blank, because of worrying or anxiety
21. persistent irritability
22. difficulty getting to sleep because of worrying


*continued on page 10*



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*Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety, from page 10*

- C) The disorder does not meet the criteria for panic disorder, phobic anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, or hypochondriacal disorder
- D) Most commonly used exclusion criteria: not sustained by a physical disorder, such as hyperthyroidism, an organic mental disorder or psychoactive substance-related disorder, such as excess consumption of amphetamine-like substances, or withdrawal from benzodiazepines

*The college process will never be completely stress-free. The key with anxiety disorders is to act when you begin noticing shifts with your students.*


Executive functioning challenges can be a product of students who are suffering from Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Students may consciously or subconsciously avoid the application process altogether if they are having symptoms of anxiety. This might look like missing meetings with their IEC, “forgetting” to work on their college essay, or waiting to ask recommenders for letters at the very last minute.

It is important to understand that some diagnoses may also need to be ruled out before we assume that your student is struggling with Generalized Anxiety Disorder. It could be Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Panic Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder,

or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. If you are seeing that your students are shutting down, your job as an IEC is not to make a diagnosis, but to be familiar with symptoms that escalate enough to make a professional referral.

## Tips to Help Decrease Anxiety during the Application Process

- Refer students to a licensed therapist experienced working with anxiety disorders in students.
- Review your application checklist and identify ways to break down tasks into sub-tasks.
- Use tools or programs to assist with to-do list items (i.e., CollegePlannerPro).
- Schedule more frequent check-in meetings to track progress—and celebrate successes!
- Encourage students to visit colleges to demystify perceptions they may have.
- Create a truly balanced college list with reach, target, and likely options; students need to also be enthusiastic about their likely (safe) options!
- Share specific experiences from former clients who are in college; this can help allay anxiety with your students.

The college process will never be completely stress-free. The key with anxiety disorders is to act when you begin noticing shifts with your students. Take note of the concerning symptoms. If they persist over several weeks, it is critical to share your observations with their parents or guardians so a referral to a professional can be made. 



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# A Hands-off Approach to College Counseling

By Anne Holmdahl, CEP, IECA (WA)

I often tell my students that there is no one “right” way to navigate through high school. There are some wrong ways—let’s not fail classes or go to jail—but otherwise, it’s just fine to choose your own path (within reason).

Similarly, there is no one “right” way to structure our businesses as independent educational consultants (IECs). Flash back to 25 years ago. I was asked to lead a group of local volunteers for the Stanford Admissions Office in a new venture to involve alumni and parent volunteers in the admissions process. Because we were one of a handful of pilot programs, we received full training as if we were newbie admission officers and, over the 12 years I led the local group, I got a great look at the institutional side of admissions through their lens.

I loved meeting the students and, as my own children got older and their friends’ older siblings started hitting high school age, I started talking with them about college as well. I’ll never forget the day I asked one young man where he was thinking about applying to college. He said, “UW, WSU, and maybe Western.” I said, “And??” Deafening silence.

In 2010, I’d never heard of independent educational consulting. I did a bit of research and discovered the UC College Counseling programs and registered for the “OG” (original) program at UCLA. I still didn’t quite know

what I was going to do with this, but I was encouraged by the fact that I actually knew a lot of what was being taught already.

I was the PTSA president at my kids’ high school and had a meeting with a local mental health counselor to try to get her to come speak to our parents. She asked what I was doing, and I told her about this crazy idea I had to help kids along this path to college. But I said I was a bit nervous about it. She asked a big question: “Why not?” I didn’t have an answer for that, and so Common Sense College Counseling was born.

I attended my local ACAC conference that spring and met a few local IECs. I reached out to a few, but no one had the time or inclination to take on a mentee, so I decided to create what I thought I would want for my own kids—a general guidance plan, starting in 8th grade, that just ensured that students were on a good path for them as they navigate their way through high school and off to college.

It wasn’t until several years later, when I discovered the professional organizations for IECs, that I realized that my program was relatively unusual. It’s not “hourly”—families don’t reach out when and if they think they need some help. It’s definitely not a comprehensive

*continued on page 12*



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*Hands-off Approach, from page 11*

program where an up-front fee pays for some set of services over time. It's a bit of a hybrid.

I call it a hands-off approach to college counseling.

I meet with each of my 50 students in each grade (so, yes, 200-plus kids total) once a year in the winter of 8th, 9th, and 10th grades. At that meeting, usually running about an hour, we discuss course selection, extracurricular activities, and summer plans. For the 10th graders, we also create a standardized testing plan.


In 11th grade, we meet twice. At the winter meeting, we cover the same topics, discuss which teachers they will ask for letters of recommendation, and create a list of 10-30 colleges that might be good fits for them—all in about two hours. At the second 11th grade meeting in the spring, we narrow that list down to the set of schools to which the student will apply, discuss the application process and essay writing, and set a general timeline. After every meeting, I write up copious, comprehensive meeting notes, send them to the student and the parent, and upload them to the planner. And then they are off to the races.

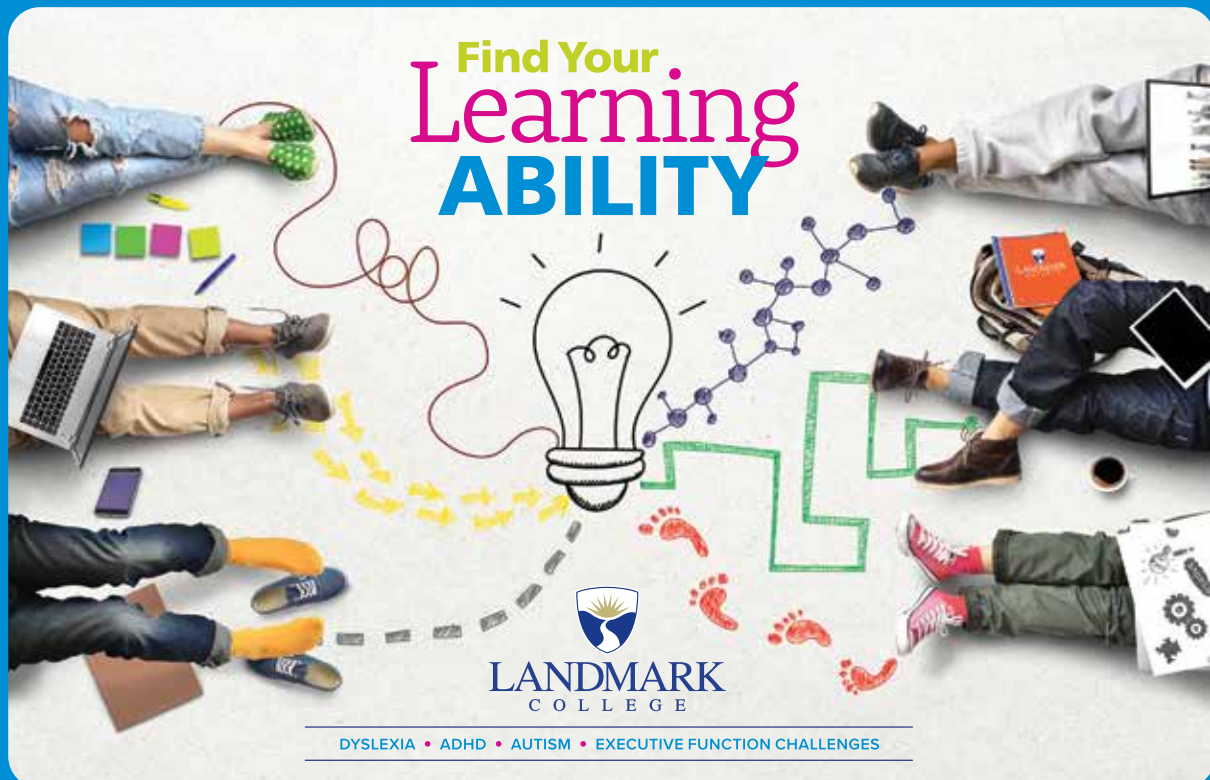
All of our essay work is done back and forth over email. The student sends me a draft; I scribble all over it (often sending back more notes than the original text) and send it back. It usually takes us around four to six drafts to get to a final personal statement. I send general reminders to the whole group of students about getting things done. I send out information about supplemental essays, interviews, resources (I'll be

using the AXS Companion this year for Common App information), and just generally keep nudging them over email and through the planner (I use CollegePlannerPro). I don't text them. I don't call them. We don't have scheduled (or unscheduled) meetings.


This is their process. I am not driving the car; they are. I give them the map, not the step-by-step directions. If they don't get there, maybe they just weren't quite ready yet. And that's okay.

Families pay as they go and pay for what they get; if a meeting lasts for an hour, they pay for that hour. If it lasts for 90 minutes, they pay for 90 minutes. And, in the rare instances when students show up prepared and we finish up in 45 minutes, that's all they pay for. Parents are always welcome in meetings and learn quickly that I am in charge of the order of operations and the student is in charge of answering the questions. I track my time during essay editing and bill out every few weeks, mostly so parents know where we are and don't get hit with a huge, unexpected bill.

We laugh a lot. We roll our eyes at each other frequently. There are occasional tears. I miss the hugs now that I'm 100 percent virtual, but I don't miss the winter colds that the kids always seemed to share with me. And it works. The class of 2023 will be attending 31 unique institutions. In the last five years, my students have applied to over 197 unique schools and have chosen to attend 89 different institutions. This approach allows me to work with a larger number of students with less pressure on me—expectations are set early and frequently, so by the time we get to senior year, there are very few complaints. To me, it just makes common sense. 



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# What Makes a Successful Baccalaureate/MD Candidate?

By Julie Raynor Gross, EdM, MBA, CEP, IECA (NY)

Baccalaureate/MD programs, for which students apply in high school, offer the chance to earn a bachelor's degree and a doctor of medicine degree in one go—and to apply only once for both programs, bypassing the regular medical school application process.

Such programs range in length, from accelerated programs of six or seven years to standard-length programs of eight years (in which each degree takes four years to complete). Some take place at a single institution, while at others, students earn their bachelor's from one school and their MD from another.

These programs are among the most selective in the US and require top attributes and achievements along many dimensions. So, what does it take to gain admittance to a BA/MD or BS/MD program?

## Overview of Baccalaureate/MD Programs

First, let's take a look at the features of baccalaureate/MD programs. While there are about 150 MD-granting

medical schools in the US, there are only a few dozen combined baccalaureate/MD programs.

## Admissions Information

### Application Plans

Programs typically require students to apply by November or December of their senior year of high school, and notify students whether they've been admitted by around March or April. Some programs, like Brown University's Program in Liberal Medical Education (PLME), offer both Early Decision and Regular Decision application options; others, like Drexel University's BA/BS+MD Early Assurance Program, have just one admissions deadline. Some programs, like Howard University's BS/MD program, have students first apply to the university; once they've been admitted, they may be invited to apply separately to the baccalaureate/MD program. Other programs, such as the Penn State-Jefferson Accelerated Premedical-Medical (PMM), allow students to apply to the baccalaureate/MD program via their initial application.

*continued on page 14*



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## Course Requirements

Programs may require applicants to have taken prerequisite courses prior to enrolling, such as, at Howard, two or more years of foreign language, biology, chemistry, physics, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and pre-calculus. Some have minimum GPA requirements in order to apply, such as 3.7 on a 4.0 scale at Hofstra University's 4+4 Program or a 4.0 weighted high school GPA at the University of South Florida's 7-Year BS/MD Program. Some programs require applicants to take the SAT or ACT, while others do not. For those that do, there's often a minimum required score for each. (At the University of Central Florida, for example, applicants must earn a 1500 on the SAT or a 34 on the ACT in order to be considered for admission to the Burnett Medical Scholars Program.)



## Interview Requirements

Depending on the program, students may be invited to interview around January or February. Some programs ask students to take a Situational Judgment Test (SJT) like Casper prior to applying, or, in the case of Brown, submit a video portfolio. (Some others have students take an SJT test during the undergraduate portion of the program as a requirement of advancing on to medical school.)

## Selectivity

These programs are highly selective, with very small class sizes. Brown University's, for example, accepts about 50 applicants per year; in 2021-2022, more than 3,500 students applied, so the acceptance rate was 1.5 percent. Drexel University's program accepts around 60 students; for fall 2022, 2,705 students applied, for an acceptance rate of 2.3 percent. (Only 811 of those 2,705 applicants, though, met the minimum GPA, SAT/AC, and deadline requirements to be eligible.) Case Western Reserve University's Pre-Professional Scholars Program in Medicine accepts 15-20 students per year; George Washington University's Seven-Year Dual BA/MD Program accepts around 10 out of 1,000-1,200 applicants, for an acceptance rate of around 1 percent. Rochester University describes its Early Medical Scholars (REMS) Program as "the most competitive combined degree program at Rochester."

## Program Information

### Program Length

Baccalaureate/MD programs range in length from six to eight years. In programs that last eight years—such as Case Western's, Drexel's, and Hofstra's—each of the two degrees (the BA or BS, and the MD) takes the standard four years to complete that it would if students earned them separately rather than as part of a combined program.

### Baccalaureate/MD Breakdown

In shorter programs, the time devoted to each degree varies widely. The seven-year Penn State-Jefferson program, for example, entails three years of college at Penn State followed by four years of med school at the Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC) College of Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University. At the University of South Florida's seven-year program, students spend three years working toward their BS at the Judy Genshaft Honors College at USF; complete one year of overlapping BS/MD study at the Morsani College of Medicine; and spend the following three years completing their medical degree. At Howard University's six-year program, two years are devoted to the BS degree, and the following four years to the MD. At the six-year University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine's BA/MD Program, students devote three-fourths of the first two years to their BA and one-fourth to their med school coursework. The following four years are devoted primarily to med school coursework, but a fraction of the time is still devoted to completing BA requirements.

The Union College Leadership in Medicine program is unusual: it's eight years total, but in the first four years, students earn two degrees—a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in healthcare management—before progressing on to medical school. These students thus graduate with three degrees rather than the standard two. (Union's is the only baccalaureate/MD program in the country in which students earn a master's degree in healthcare management in addition to a BS degree.)

Throughout this article, I will illustrate the attributes of a successful candidate to baccalaureate/MD programs via a deep dive into Union College's program. To that end, I have interviewed Joanne Fitzgerald, director of the Leadership in Medicine Program at Union College, and Vernon Castillo, senior associate dean of admissions at Union College.

### Degree and Major Requirements

Programs differ in whether they offer students a BA, a BS, or a choice between either type of bachelor's degree prior to the MD. In addition, while some programs—like Brown's and Case Western's—allow students to choose whatever college major they'd like, in others, specific majors are required. At Howard, for example, students must earn a BS in either biology or chemistry; at Drexel, they must major in biological sciences, chemistry, or biomedical engineering.

### Course Requirements

Major aside, programs often require baccalaureate/MD students to take specific courses in college that prepare them to tackle medical school coursework. At Case Western, though students can choose any college major, they must complete a roster of courses in biochemistry, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics/statistics, and behavioral sciences. FAU

students must complete a Special Topics in Medicine course in their first year and a specialized pre-health course (such as a medical internship) in their second or third year. UMKC mandates that students take specific courses during each semester of their enrollment. (Fall of year one, for example, means taking the medicine courses Medical Terminology, Learning Basic Medical Sciences, and Fundamentals of Medical Practice; the arts and sciences courses Functional Anatomy with Lab and General Chemistry I with Lab; and two General Education Requirements.) Drexel states that students must “complete a rigorous plan of study which includes at least 14 credits and two STEM courses each quarter.”

## Requirements for Med School Matriculation (Once You Are in College)

The benefits of earning a baccalaureate/MD degree include potentially spending less time total on the two degrees, and bypassing the regular medical school application process. As Case Western puts it, students are thus “relieved of much of the anxiety and uncertainty associated with pre-professional studies. Consequently, they feel free to undertake challenging courses of study and pursue a variety of interests as they prepare for professional studies.”

However, this doesn’t mean that once you’ve enrolled in a baccalaureate/MD program, you’ll automatically advance to medical school! Programs have specific and often rigorous requirements that students must meet during the college portion of the degree in order to matriculate at medical school. And some programs, like USF’s, do require students to submit an application to their companion med school in the course of their undergraduate studies. This all makes sense, given

the rigor of medical school education and the impressive transcripts, scores, and research/clinical experiences necessary to be admitted to these programs under normal circumstances.

### MCAT Requirements

Some programs, like Brown’s, Rochester’s, and Union’s, don’t require baccalaureate/MD students to take the MCAT at all in order to advance to medical school. Many, though, require it. Drexel mandates a minimum score of 513 (with a breakdown of 128 in each section except for Critical Analysis and Reasoning, which can be 127). Hofstra requires that students earn an MCAT score equivalent to the 80th percentile on their first sitting. Stony Brook’s Scholars for Medicine Program requires “a cumulative MCAT score comparable to the national average of medical school matriculates.” Other schools don’t require the MCAT, but mandate that if students do take it, they achieve a certain score. At Case Western, for example, students who opt to take the MCAT must achieve a score above the 94th percentile.

### Minimum GPA Requirements

Programs may also mandate that students maintain a certain GPA while completing the college portion of the combined degree. The Florida Atlantic University Schmidt College of Medicine Bachelor’s/MD Dual Degree Program, for example, requires that students maintain a 3.7 for both their cumulative undergraduate average GPA and their cumulative science GPA. At Hofstra, the minimum overall and science GPA requirements are 3.6. At Stony Brook, BA students must achieve a minimum GPA of 3.4 in order to advance to medical school.

*continued on page 16*



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### Other Requirements

Programs may have other demands as well, such as service or research requirements. At Drexel, undergrads must complete at least 100 hours of service as well as a six-month co-op in research, clinical, or health informatics; health law; or bioengineering. At FAU, students are required to amass a minimum of 50 hours of clinical experience per semester in years two and three; amass 50 hours of volunteer work per year throughout the undergraduate experience; complete laboratory research that culminates in an abstract for a poster or oral presentation; and serve in a leadership role during years two and three. USF students must complete at least 60 hours of medical observation and 60 hours of community service by the end of year two, and at least two semesters of research throughout their undergraduate years.

### Interviews and Recommendation Letters

Students may be asked to interview, submit a Situational Judgment Test like Casper, and/or submit recommendation letters in order to advance on to medical school. At both UCF and USF, for example, students must provide two letters of recommendation from faculty as well as interview with the programs' respective medical schools in order to matriculate.

## A Closer Look at a Selection of Baccalaureate/MD Programs

To give you a sense of the range of what these baccalaureate/MD programs entail, on the next page is a breakdown of three very different programs' characteristics and requirements. Note that the Union College Leadership in Medicine Program with Albany Medical College is unique in that, in total, three different institutions are involved: Union College for the BS, Clarkson University for the MS or MBA, and Albany Medical College for the MD. (Program requirements may change, so check school websites to confirm details.)

### Participating in a high school research program is a huge plus.

#### Characteristics of a Successful Baccalaureate/MD Candidate

As you might expect, given the rigor of baccalaureate/MD programs, students well-positioned to be admitted to such programs must have transcripts and resumes at least as impressive as other college applicants'. But what in particular makes high school students stand out to baccalaureate/MD program administrators?

#### Rigorous Coursework

If college students applying to med school need to demonstrate a passion for science and medicine, as well as for helping people, high school students applying to baccalaureate/MD programs need to demonstrate the very same—but earlier. Not only should high school coursework be rigorous and grades high, but your curriculum should favor the sciences. Rochester, for example, seeks students with at least a 3.95 unweighted GPA who rank in the top three percent of their graduating class and have taken "an exceptionally rigorous high school math and science curriculum, including calculus, biology, and chemistry." USF urges applicants to "complete a rigorous high school curriculum, including

advanced coursework in biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics (calculus and statistics are preferred). Additionally, since the MCAT (medical college admissions test) now includes a section on psychosocial foundations of behavior, students are also encouraged to complete courses in the social and behavioral sciences."

As Joanne Fitzgerald, director of the Leadership in Medicine Program at Union College, puts it, students in the program "have got to have the intellectual goods." This means both having the academic background and the intellectual capacity to keep up with such a demanding program. Her colleague, Vernon Castillo, senior associate dean of admissions at Union College, adds that applicants "have to have excellent grades, especially in their math and science courses." If their high schools provide a class rank, students must be at the top of their class. (Beyond academic background, Fitzgerald notes that certain personality traits and skills are necessary to succeed. These include grit and resilience, organization, maturity, and the ability to solve problems independently: "This is a tough program, and there's a lot of pressure.")

#### Science Research

Participating in a high school research program is a huge plus. These programs, which can last anywhere from one to all four years of high school, involve conducting original research in science, math, engineering, and/or social science. Students are often expected to conduct research over the summer before senior year, which they can do with mentors they've sought out individually or in organized pre-college summer research programs. The research culminates in a 20-page scientific paper that is submitted to national competitions such as Regeneron and ISEF.

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## Sample of different programs' characteristics and requirements:

	Brown University's Program in Liberal Medical Education (PLME)	George Washington University's Seven-Year Dual BA/MD Program	Union College Leadership in Medicine Program
<b>Number of years</b>	8 years (4 + 4)	7 years (3 + 4)	8 years (4 + 4)
<b>Number of institutions</b>	2	2	3
<b>Baccalaureate degree</b>	AB or ScB (Brown's terms for BA and BS degrees)	BA	BS
<b>Graduate degrees</b>	MD	MD	MD and either MS/MBA
<b>Application plan options</b>	Early Decision and Regular Decision	Regular Decision	Early Action with November 1 application deadline
<b>SAT/ACT requirement to apply</b>	Test-optional	Required; no set minimum, but GW suggests the ACT score fall above 33 and the SAT above 1450	Required; the minimum ACT score is 30; the minimum SAT score is above 1410
<b>Course requirements to apply</b>	Honors or advanced placement offerings available to them in high school are encouraged	No specific courses are required, but applicants should present a strong transcript, especially in math/science courses	Courses in biology and chemistry, and preferably physics
<b>Interview requirements</b>	Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a video portfolio	Interviews are conducted in February	Promising applicants are interviewed in January through March of senior year
<b>Recommendation letter requirements</b>	Three: counselor and two teachers; at least one letter from a math or science teacher is encouraged but not required	Two: counselor and teacher	Two: counselor and teacher
<b>Essay requirements</b>	The Brown Supplement includes three required essays for PLME applicants	A small percentage of qualified applicants are selected to complete a second essay about their motivations for medicine and their interest in GW	Standard Common Application essays which students may use to address their interests in medicine and healthcare systems, and/or their clinical experience, but are not required to do so
<b>MCAT requirement to advance to MD</b>	Not required	Students must provide a practice exam score from an online MCAT review	Not required
<b>Minimum undergraduate GPA to advance to MD</b>	Brown does not calculate a GPA but the overall transcript will be examined, and students must earn a B or above in required courses	3.6, with no grade below a C in any science course	3.5 overall GPA; 3.5 science GPA (cumulative, not in every individual semester)
<b>Undergraduate major</b>	Any	Any, but students must apply to and attend GW's Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, and must choose a major that allows them to complete their undergraduate degree in three years	Interdisciplinary major: students choose one science/math major (most commonly biology) and one social science/humanities major (most commonly psychology)
<b>Undergraduate course requirements</b>	Required classes parallel premed courses	Required premed courses (including bio, chem, physics, psychology, sociology, and calculus)	A minimum of 16 or 17 math/science courses; 15 humanities/social sciences courses; and 10 additional graduate courses for the MS or 14 graduate courses for the MBA

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## Clinical Experience

Another way to demonstrate your strong desire to enter a career in medicine at this early stage is to amass clinical experience—that is, experience working with patients. Students can, for example, work for an ambulance corps or EMT program, or volunteer at a hospital or nursing home. GW seeks applicants who have “had some experience in the medical profession, hopefully working directly with patients.” In addition, students can gain valuable experience shadowing physicians as a way to gain more exposure to the medical field and observe qualities they would like to emulate in their future careers as physicians. Union College and Albany Medical College, which partner for the Leadership in Medicine Program, see clinical experience, which is a prerequisite for entry, as a type of informed consent: before embarking on the program, students have gotten as accurate a taste for what being a doctor is like without actually being one, and believe they are up for the challenge. “The medical college wants to make sure that students are genuinely interested in medicine” far beyond simply attending a rigorous program like Union’s, Castillo says.

## Volunteer Work

Future doctors are expected to care not only about aiding patients, but also about helping people more broadly. Thus, volunteer work outside of the medical profession—which demonstrates compassion and a sense of responsibility to others—also reflects well on baccalaureate/MD applicants. As with students accepted to the most selective colleges, those accepted to baccalaureate/MD programs are advised to show heavy involvement in extracurricular activities they’re passionate about, and that involve leadership skills.

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*Thus, volunteer work outside of the medical profession—which demonstrates compassion and a sense of responsibility to others—also reflects well on baccalaureate/MD applicants.*

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## Motivation for a Career in Medicine

Though applying to a baccalaureate/MD program would seem to indicate an early and intense desire to become a doctor, it’s important that you explicitly demonstrate this desire clearly in your application. GW seeks students who “are fully committed to being a doctor”; Rochester seeks students who “are passionate about a career in medicine.” Applications often specifically ask students to speak to this issue; UMKC, for example, prompts applicants to answer the question, “What motivates you to pursue a career in medicine?” Stony Brook asks, “What aspects about medicine intrigue you? Describe how these aspects influence your life.” Either way, applicants would do well to write in persuasive, compelling, and detailed prose about why they wish to serve as physicians.

“I believe they need to be intrinsically motivated,” Fitzgerald says of students who are apt to succeed in Union’s Leadership in Medicine Program. “It’s got to be in them. They’ve got to know for sure they want to be a doctor.” Students who are told by parents that they have to be doctors may or may not truly desire this career path, “and you can see the difference,” she says.

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Using the AXS Companion in your practice will allow you to work with additional clients by freeing up time spent repeating the same information. Additionally, by sharing the AXS Companion in your community, IECA members will play a vital role in transforming the college application landscape to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to pursue higher education.



Scan the QR code or visit [AXSCompanion.org](https://AXSCompanion.org) for more information.

She adds: “To be able to go through this gauntlet, you really have to want the goal. It’s not just something you want to try out.” 

*If you are working with students who may be interested in applying to baccalaureate/MD programs, first ascertain how sure they are that they absolutely want to be a doctor. If they’re pursuing such programs for prestige or parental pressure, this path is probably not right for them! They will have ample opportunity to decide to become doctors while in college if they so choose. If, however, they are genuinely driven to become a physician, I hope the above tips will help you guide them toward strong and authentic applications.*

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# A Changing Landscape: Mental Health in 2023

By Michelle Grappo, MA, EdM, NCSP, IECA (CA)

Whether your specialty is college, school, or therapeutic advising, I doubt there is a practitioner among us who has not encountered today's youth mental health epidemic. In February 2023, the Centers for Disease Control released shocking data that nearly 3 in 5 (57 percent) teen girls felt persistently sad or hopeless in 2021. Boys reported these symptoms at about half the rate, which is still an alarming figure.

Despite a shortage of pediatric behavioral health providers, and what seems like endless demand, we have seen multiple wilderness and residential program closures in the last three years. While I cannot begin to make sense of all the forces at play, here are themes I am watching in the behavioral health ecosystem. While some may seem irrelevant to

our work, I think it is important to understand how the landscape at large is shifting.

First, there is the money. Spending and investment in mental health has never been more robust. The federal government has allocated \$1 billion to boost mental health support in schools<sup>1</sup> and \$240 million for programs that increase awareness and access to mental health support<sup>2</sup> for school-aged youth. New data from the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) indicates employer and employee spending on mental health services, as a percent of overall spending, increased from 6.8 percent in 2013 to 8.2 percent in 2020, for an estimated total of almost \$77 billion on mental health in 2020 (this includes all age brackets but is still a staggering figure).<sup>3</sup>



*Michelle Grappo, RNG International Educational Consultants LLC, can be reached at Michelle@RNGInternational.com.*

1 [whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/29/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-two-new-actions-to-address-youth-mental-health-crisis](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/29/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-two-new-actions-to-address-youth-mental-health-crisis)

2 [whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/29/fact-sheet-Biden-Harris-administration-announces-two-new-actions-to-address-youth-mental-health-crisis](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/29/fact-sheet-Biden-Harris-administration-announces-two-new-actions-to-address-youth-mental-health-crisis)

3 [medicitynews.com/2022/09/report-spending-on-mental-health-services-substantially-increased-from-2013-to-2020](https://www.medicitynews.com/2022/09/report-spending-on-mental-health-services-substantially-increased-from-2013-to-2020)

continued on page 24

Private industry has also arrived on the scene. While we don't know the total value of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) activity in the pediatric behavioral health space, it won't surprise the therapeutic consultant community that deal activity was up over 46 percent in 2022 as compared to 2021. Independent educational consultants (IECs) will be familiar with some of the players and moves: Consonance Capital Partners acquired Embark in December 2022 for an undisclosed amount, though experts estimate it to be around \$400 million.<sup>4</sup> Newport Healthcare, another well-known entity, acquired PrairieCare in November 2022 for an also undisclosed amount.<sup>5</sup>

Not wanting to miss out, insurer payers are also investing in behavioral health. See, for example, UnitedHealth's investment in digital platforms such as Alma and AbleTo. Optum (a UnitedHealth subsidiary) acquired Refresh Mental Health for a reported \$700 million from a private equity firm.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Blue Shield of California is a stakeholder in online youth mental care platform, Brightline.<sup>7</sup>

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*At the risk of generalizing, there are more options now—residentially but also even outpatient/virtually—for young people with internalizing behaviors (e.g., anxiety, depression, withdrawal). And there seem to be fewer options for those struggling with externalizing behaviors (e.g., any kind of aggression, defiance, lying).*

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On that note, I would be remiss not to mention specific investment in pediatric digital mental health providers. There's Hopscotch, which recently raised \$8 million<sup>8</sup> and aforementioned Brightline, which has raised \$212 million. Charlie Health is an all-virtual pediatric intensive outpatient program. An all-virtual program is probably not what many IECs and clinicians are used to, but it's important to be aware that clients may be accessing these options prior to coming to us or, for some clients, that these are the only affordable and accessible options.

Not everything is roses in the tech space. Brightline laid off 20 percent of its workforce in November 2022 and another 20 percent of the workforce in May 2023.<sup>9</sup> One recalcitrant challenge, even for virtual platforms, is insurance payer reimbursement rates, but it's hard to imagine that tech-based care isn't here to stay, as it could address critical issues in access (insurance and geographic).

While we are on the subject of technology, let's turn to AI, arguably a future cornerstone of healthcare. AI offers the promise of improving screening, triage, assessment, integrating the latest research into treatment, and providing enhanced clinical data collection and progress monitoring. You may have seen the controversy surrounding the eating disorder AI chatbot that encouraged eating disorders,<sup>10</sup> but there are many other AI applications. Videra, a Salt Lake City-based start-up that has raised over \$3 million, provides AI-assisted insights into mental health screening and clinical progress.<sup>11</sup> Videra is already being used in residential treatment programs well known to IECs, such as Cascade Academy in Midway, Utah.

At this time, no one thinks AI will replace the work of skilled human clinician. But rather, AI holds the promise of freeing up bandwidth for clinicians, providing large-scale screening and triage support, so we can better triage. It can also enhance clinicians' work through improved progress monitoring.

A final space I want to touch on is residential programming. It used to be that high-quality, insurance-based residential programming was hard to come by. But now we are seeing an expansion in insurance-based residential options and an increase in more specialized residential options, such as OCD treatment, all-gender/LGBTQ+ programming, primary mental health, and neurodiversity focused (just a few examples: Cascade's new OCD program, Ascend Healthcare in Los Angeles, and Polaris in Tarzana, California). Meanwhile, we are also seeing a contraction as some programs struggle with new regulatory challenges, particularly around how to work with acutely aggressive clients.

At the risk of generalizing, there are more options now—residentially but also even outpatient/virtually—for young people with internalizing behaviors (e.g., anxiety, depression, withdrawal). And there seem to be fewer options for those struggling with externalizing behaviors (e.g., any kind of aggression, defiance, lying).

It's hard to say what the future holds for behavioral health. I think we will continue to see robust need for mental health services in the pediatric population, at every level of care. While it may wax and wane, investment seems likely to continue to try to meet this need. Meanwhile, it is really a time of change and adaptation as we adjust to social changes, new technology and modalities, and regulatory challenges. In the midst of everything, I think it's important for IECs and clinicians to stay current while also staying grounded. Even in these rough waters, we still offer clients the benefit of safe harbor through our professional and relationally oriented approach to advising. 🌊

4 [bhbusiness.com/2023/02/09/consonance-capital-partners-acquires-majority-stake-in-youth-focused-embark-behavioral-health](https://bhbusiness.com/2023/02/09/consonance-capital-partners-acquires-majority-stake-in-youth-focused-embark-behavioral-health)

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6 [fiercehealthcare.com/payers/optum-acquires-refresh-mental-health-report](https://fiercehealthcare.com/payers/optum-acquires-refresh-mental-health-report)

7 [news.blueshieldca.com/2020/08/19/in-the-news-blue-shield-of-california-invests-in-brightline-behavioral-health-startup-for-youth](https://news.blueshieldca.com/2020/08/19/in-the-news-blue-shield-of-california-invests-in-brightline-behavioral-health-startup-for-youth)

8 [crunchbase.com/organization/hopscotch-a2e8](https://crunchbase.com/organization/hopscotch-a2e8)

9 [bhbusiness.com/2023/05/03/pediatric-mental-health-provider-brightline-cuts-20-of-its-workforce-for-the-second-time-in-six-months](https://bhbusiness.com/2023/05/03/pediatric-mental-health-provider-brightline-cuts-20-of-its-workforce-for-the-second-time-in-six-months)

10 [npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/06/08/1180838096/an-eating-disorders-chatbot-offered-dieting-advice-raising-fears-about-ai-in-health](https://npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/06/08/1180838096/an-eating-disorders-chatbot-offered-dieting-advice-raising-fears-about-ai-in-health)

11 [crunchbase.com/organization/videra-health](https://crunchbase.com/organization/videra-health)



# An Overview of Therapeutic Program Options

By Cynthia Cohen, MSPH, IECA (CO)

As we work together to create additional meaningful ways of collaborating among all independent educational consultants (IECs), we are strengthening our commitment to help young people thrive.

The proliferation of mental health issues among young people continues to be very disturbing. Evidence of struggling, suffering, or just being stuck can be isolation, technology overuse, disordered eating, substance abuse, failure to attend school, failure to complete work, lack of participation in formerly enjoyed activities, choosing to have lower-achieving friends, defined anxiety and depression, experience of a trauma, and even suicidal ideation.

Nevertheless, there are effective approaches that enable young people to achieve positive mental health—a sense of well-being, satisfying social and family relationships, and the ability to pursue meaningful, productive activity.

In the interest of exploring opportunities to collaborate, I will explain some of the types of programs and therapeutic approaches that have been successful.

The approaches to which I am referring are basically experiential: people live the therapy rather than “go to it.” Therapeutic support, while people are pursuing their lives, has been demonstrated to be extremely powerful.

The following are questions to which therapeutic consultants regularly respond:

- How do you know if a young person needs extra support?
- What kinds of extra support are available?
- Are there a variety of levels of intensity of approaches?
- Do hesitant or unwilling young people end up hating their parents?
- How do you decide on the level of support?
- Do they have to leave their school to get and benefit from extra support? How do you decide to take that course of action?

If a college or school consultant is working with a client for whom some of these questions arise, therapeutic consultants are available to discuss possible approaches.

*continued on page 26*



*Cynthia Cohen, Pathway Partners, can be reached at [Cynthia@PathwayPartners.info](mailto:Cynthia@PathwayPartners.info).*

### *Therapeutic Program Options, from page 25*

The therapeutic processes to which most IECA consultants refer employ experiential therapies—through which people “live the therapy,” i.e., they don’t simply go to therapy sessions, whether group or individual, but instead, they are supported therapeutically while pursuing life activities.

Some of the types of programs available are outlined below. Some are geared to participants with one type of issue—such as neurodiversity, technology addiction, or substance abuse—while others are heterogenous.

Programs typically focus on helping people define their values, explore their interests, find purpose and a path, and develop passions. All programs involve family work; participants are not sent off to be “fixed,” but are viewed as part of a system. Most programs are holistic in their approaches and look at nutrition, physical activity, executive functioning, and developing positive social relationships in the context of helping people to grow. Within each modality, there are specific programs focusing on substance abuse. Substance abuse for adolescents, and even young adults, is often a maladaptive coping skill rather than a full-blown addiction—and either can be treated. Overuse or addiction to technology is similar. There are a variety of approaches for helping students use technology in appropriate, balanced ways.

**Therapeutic wilderness programs** serve children, adolescents, and young adults who are struggling, suffering, or stuck in any way. Participants live outdoors in breathtaking settings away from urban and suburban culture for approximately 30-90 days. Wilderness therapy offers a life-changing opportunity for participants to develop self-efficacy, accountability, motivation, and openness to new possibilities, enabling participants to embrace their strengths and deal with their challenges. Programs help people to find their strengths again, and to become resilient and eventually to thrive. Often a student who is having a hard time but getting through a year could benefit immensely from a summer or semester wilderness experience.

In some programs, participants live outside the entire time, while others are partially indoors, for perhaps half the week; some wilderness programs include academics. They all help people develop self-efficacy, so they both become accountable for their past actions and motivated to grow and change. Participants have 24 hours a day of experiential therapy in which they can establish new patterns. They develop positive coping skills for challenging situations, a sense of well-being, the ability to create satisfying social connections, and an understanding of how they can become productive in ways that are meaningful to them.

This sounds almost magical—and it comes about as a result of a multiplicity of circumstances. Dynamic therapy is provided with therapists coming into the wilderness for two or more days each week and experienced, highly trained and skilled staff carrying out the therapeutic work for the remainder of the days. Everyone carries their own food and sleeping paraphernalia, they learn primitive skills, they cook, they hike, and some programs include adventures like rock climbing or canyoneering. Living in nature, with a community of peers who arrive at different times and have a culture of working to be in a better place, is motivating and educational. The opportunity

to work closely with others through a variety of situations and with therapeutic support leads to the development of a strong community. The break that participants experience from the familiar, including emotional triggers and technology, actually fosters neuroplasticity, which enhances the ability to grow and change. Wilderness programs are an extremely effective step in helping clients to find their strengths and become ready to address the issues they truly need to face in order to establish a sense of well-being. Such programs may be the first, intensive step for many clients, or they may be enough to allow someone to return to their life at home or in school and address the issues they have faced.



**Combination residential treatment and wilderness therapy** involves participants living in a residential setting (a home or dormitory-like building) for several days and pursuing adventures in wilderness for two or three days per week.

**Residential treatment centers and therapeutic schools** are geared to helping children and adolescents learn age-appropriate life skills with intensive therapeutic support. Participants may follow a short-term, intensive program only or pursue this as a step in their therapeutic journey. These programs include some form of academics which sometimes may be experiential and teacher-led and other times online. They also include intensive clinical support, with therapists often spending time in the milieu with students as well as highly trained clinical residential staff who help the students integrate the therapeutic teachings and insights into their lives. They use a variety of experiences, typically including recreational therapy to help students develop competence and to improve their mental health issues. They often work with students to improve executive functioning skills and address other challenges.

**Young adult transitional living programs** support people ages 18-30 (with some variations, i.e., 17-year-olds and people over 30). They provide support for participants so they can learn and establish life skills, find success in school and work, and develop community. In some programs, people live in a group house, while in others they live in apartments alone or with roommates, sometimes in a complex all together, and others more separated. Some programs have externally structured limits on technology use, freedom to go out, etc. and others do not and use a relational approach to structure instead.

The programs offer a variety of community activities which can include cooking and eating together regularly, adventure, community service, cultural outings, etc. They provide different levels of therapy; at some, clients select their own therapists from the community or from within the program. In others, they are assigned therapists—and still others do not require therapy for everyone. Some programs are heterogeneous, while others are focused on people with neurodiversity.


*Transitional programs provide multipronged approaches, including life skills and opportunities to be part of the community whether through volunteering, working, or school (or all three). This promotes participants establishing and living according to their values, exploring and defining their interests, finding purpose and a path, and developing passions along with positive social relationships and effectiveness at being productive.*

Transitional programs provide multipronged approaches, including life skills and opportunities to be part of the community whether through volunteering, working, or school (or all three). This promotes participants establishing and living according to their values, exploring and defining their interests, finding purpose and a path,

and developing passions along with positive social relationships and effectiveness at being productive. All such programs provide support as they encourage young adults to become successful at living independently.

Substance abuse oriented programs employ different approaches, like AA's 12-Step program, SMART Recovery, or the Seven Challenges program along with broader therapeutic programming.

Technology abuse or addiction and disordered eating programs also exist and use similar approaches to the other programs.

**Coaching and mentoring services** are proliferating for both after programs and before, or even as an alternative to programs. These may be provided by qualified therapists or highly skilled and trained clinically oriented professionals who provide mentoring and coaching services either in person or remotely. Having mentors come into the client's life may be effective in determining whether someone needs more intensive support, as well as in preventing the need for greater support. In addition, parent coaching is provided by many experienced therapists and can be instrumental in helping families develop supportive, positive environments. Both types of coaching can supplement outpatient therapy. 

*For more information about therapeutic program options, or to refer out a client to an IECA member specializing in therapeutic consulting, visit the Therapeutic Community of the IECA Member Network: [network.IECAonline.com](http://network.IECAonline.com)*

*CooperRiis is a mental health treatment program offering residential, transitional living, and-PHP Levels of Care*







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Contact Our Admissions Team Today 828-899-HOPE (4673) [Admissions@CooperRiis.Org](mailto:Admissions@CooperRiis.Org)



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### Follow IECA on Social Media!

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



Have you checked out the IECA blog lately?

Recent posts include:

- IECA Stands with the LGBTQ+ Community
- Reflecting on the Supreme Court's Decision on Affirmative Action
- IECA Advocates for Standardizing College Financial Aid Offers

Visit [link.IECAonline.com/blog](http://link.IECAonline.com/blog) to see these and other posts.

# Why I Belong

## How Do I Love Thee, IECA?

By Eleanora Ferrante, MBA, MA, IECA (NY)

*How do I love thee, IECA? Let me count the ways.*

*I love thee community.*

*The sharing and encouragement given by all.*

*I love thee professional development.*

*From webinars to conferences. The knowledge I gain is invaluable.*

*I love thee peer groups.*

*My twice-a-month session has led to friendships that extend beyond our work.*

*I love thee college tours.*

*The rolling out of the red carpet as well as the insights not seen on a prospective student tour allow me to bring added value to my clients.*

*I love thee discounts.*

*Who doesn't love getting a great deal on their IEC certificate classes?!*

*I love, well, you get the point.*



I may not be Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and I'm certainly no poet, but I am a HUGE fan of IECA. I joined as an Associate member in 2019. It was sheer luck, and a smart Google search, that brought me here. I was looking for knowledge, support, and a network of professionals who could help me develop my skills and build my business. I found all that and more in IECA.

As I nervously walked into the Atlanta conference in 2019, imposter syndrome screaming in my head, I was warmly greeted by the IECA staff. Over the course of the three days, my fears melted away. I put faces to the daily posts on the IECA Member Network. Professional members gladly shared their knowledge, connections, and handouts with me. Over meals, I spoke with other new IECs and realized that I wasn't alone. By the time I headed home, with a suitcase full of brochures and giveaways and a head filled with new ideas, I knew I had found my professional home.

During COVID, I "visited" colleges through the virtual College Conversations and attended the online conferences, continuing to build my knowledge. I attended the monthly Associate & Student Members Virtual Roundtable, where I connected with other new IECs and dove into the topics du jour. I read the Member Network posts by colleagues and came to appreciate the sharing of information by everyone. I also found the courage to start sharing my fledgling knowledge with others.

Fast forward to today. I'm a newly minted Professional member with my IEC certificate from UC Irvine (with my 10 percent IECA discount!) and an ever-growing network of peers. Of all the amazing resources that IECA provides, my network is what I value most. I have collaborated with specialists to help students with specific needs that are beyond my knowledge. I have learned ways to improve my business, work more efficiently, and reduce my potential exposure to liability. I have continued to learn about colleges, the application process, and ways to better serve my students.

*I have learned ways to improve my business, work more efficiently, and reduce my potential exposure to liability. I have continued to learn about colleges, the application process, and ways to better serve my students.*

Most importantly, I have found my people. People who continually build their knowledge and skills and willingly share with others. People who hold themselves to high ethical standards. People who want to see everyone, especially our students, succeed. People who I am proud to call my friends.

How do I love thee, IECA? I would love to count the ways, but they are simply too numerous to count. And that is why I belong.

Eleanora Ferrante, Square Peg Square Hole Coaching, Inc., can be reached at [Eleanora@SPSHCoaching.com](mailto:Eleanora@SPSHCoaching.com).

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Panel 1: A woman in a green top is on the phone, looking stressed. Speech bubbles say "WAIT YOU KNOW SOMEONE?" and "I JUST NEED HELP TO GET HIM INTO THE RIGHT COLLEGE". A caption reads "MEANWHILE...".

Panel 2: A close-up of the woman's face, looking shocked. Speech bubbles say "OMG!!!", "WHA?", and "OK, I WILL GO CHECK THEM OUT FIRST".

Panel 3: The woman is sitting at a desk with a laptop, looking at the screen. A speech bubble says "SEARCHING INTERNET WEBSITE, SOCIAL REVIEWS, YIKES!". Another speech bubble says "EH, THIS IS PAINFUL; I BETTER KEEP LOOKING". A speech bubble says "OOPS.".

Panel 4: A large "BOOM!" explosion graphic. A speech bubble says "WORD OF MOUTH ONLY GETS YOU SO FAR". Another speech bubble says "LEAD GENERATING WEBSITES THAT CONVERT!". A speech bubble says "WEBSITES LOGOS & MORE CALL US 866-640-1234". At the bottom, it says "WWW.SHORTSTORYMARKETING.COM/IECA".

# In the News

**Terry Mady-Grove** (NY) was quoted in “What to Know About College Admissions Now That Affirmative Action Is Gone” in the *New York Times* on July 8, 2023.

**Shereem Herndon-Brown** (MD) was quoted in “How to Talk About Race on College Applications, According to Admissions Experts” in *Time* on July 11, 2023 and in “US Colleges Refashion Student Essay Prompts After Ban on Affirmative Action” in *US News & World Report* on August 1, 2023.

**Joan Casey** (MA) was interviewed in a segment about the Supreme Court’s ruling and potential challenges to legacy admissions on WBZ CBS News Boston on June 30, 2023. She was also quoted in “Legacy Admissions: What It Is and Why Colleges Are Reconsidering It” in *US News & World Report* on July 21, 2023.

**Dana Ponsky** (NY) was quoted in “Duke, Baruch, or Bust: Parents Debate If Pricey Private Schools Are Still Worth It” in *Town & Country* on August 3, 2023.

**Jenn Curtis** (CA) was interviewed for a segment about how parents can handle an empty nest when their children leave for college on KCRA3 on August 28, 2023.

**Sue Luse** (MN) was quoted in “College Costs Can Feel Endless: How to Set a Budget Beyond Tuition” in the *Star Tribune* on August 28, 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](mailto:Insights@IECAonline.com).

**Robert Powers** (CA) and **Laurie Kopp Weingarten** (NJ) were quoted in “Should Your Teen Submit Their SAT or ACT Scores? Experts Weigh In,” in *New Jersey Family* on September 14, 2023. Weingarten was also quoted in “College consultants reveal their top tips to gain Ivy League admission,” in the *New York Post* on July 14, 2023; “Three changes Penn made to its application this year – and what they mean for applicants” in the *Daily Pennsylvanian* on September 5, 2023; and “Here’s What Your Teen Needs to Know About the New Digital SAT” in *New Jersey Family* on September 14, 2023.


**Brenda Friedler** (CT) and **Maria Markus** (CT) were quoted in *Stamford* magazine’s September/October 2023 issue, “What Counts in College Admissions.”

**Barbara Leventhal** (FL) was quoted in “What Is the Classic Learning Test?” on *BestColleges.com* on July 17, 2023.

**Reena Kamins** (NJ) was quoted in “Asking for a friend: Is it better to live on or off campus?” in *Real Homes* on July 1, 2023.

**Terry Chevako Bava** (Puerto Rico) was profiled in SACAC’s blog, *The Southern Scope*, in September 2023.

**Amy Hubbard** (Associate, MA) was quoted in “The 10 best public colleges and universities in the US —none are in California” on *CNBC.com* on September 13, 2023.

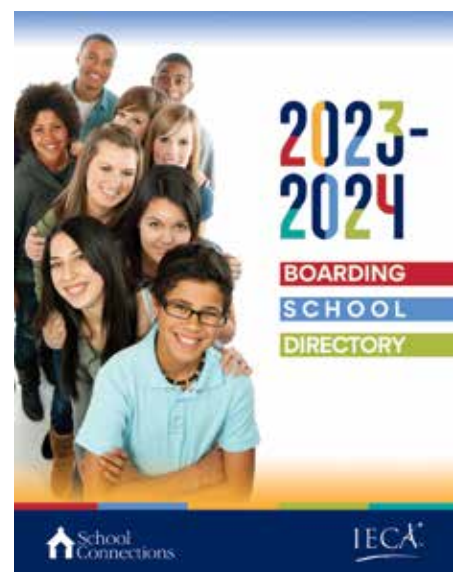
**Jeenah Park** (Associate, AZ) was profiled in the August 9, 2023 edition of *Flagstaff Business News*. 

## 2023-24 Boarding School Directory Now Available

We are pleased to announce the publication of the 2023-2024 Boarding School Directory, a joint project by School Connections and IECA. The directory provides easy access to information about boarding schools in the United States, Canada, and Europe. School-focused members were mailed their copy in October.

To view a digital copy of the publication, go to: [link.IECAonline.com/boarding-school-directory](http://link.IECAonline.com/boarding-school-directory)

To receive an additional print copy, please contact LeAnnette Bailey, IECA’s office administrator, at [LeAnnette@IECAonline.com](mailto:LeAnnette@IECAonline.com).





## Supporting the IECA Foundation Annual Fund

For more than 25 years, the IECA Foundation has served as the charitable arm of IECA. Our mission—to identify and support programs that have a significant impact on students and their educational environments—is more critical than ever!

### A Case Study: Brown Memorial Tutoring Program | Baltimore, Maryland

With the support of our generous donors, we partner with organizations that create opportunities and provide hope to deserving underserved students. Brown Memorial Tutoring Program, one of our 2022 grant recipients, serves elementary school children who attend Dorothy I. Height Elementary School, Mount Royal Elementary/Middle School, and Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School. This region has a 35 percent poverty rate, with 54 percent of children living below the poverty line. They shared the following report at the end of the 2022-23 academic year about the progress they made with the help of our grant:

*“The Brown Memorial Tutoring Program was able to recruit and train 16 new volunteer tutors ... This brought our total to 61 tutors (including the director and assistant director), up from 41 last year. We were able to enroll 71 children for the 2022-23 school year—a 29 percent increase over last year.*”



*Our theme for the tutoring year, ‘Be the Best You,’ was well-received and quite beneficial to the students. Each month, we focused on one of the following traits: responsibility, caring, respect, trust and honesty, citizenship, and fairness. Children received a personal journal in which they could answer a thought-provoking ‘Question of the Week.’ ... The*



*last week of tutoring we asked the students, ‘What did you learn at Brown Memorial this year?’ There were a variety of replies, from learning to read big words and sight words to writing correct sentences. However, one of our favorites has to be: ‘I learned to read for pleasure!’”*

### How Can You Help?

Our collective impact cannot be understated. There is no better way to put the principles of IECA and our profession to use than championing deserving organizations, like Brown Memorial Tutoring Program, through the grantmaking process of the IECA Foundation.

Consider making a gift to the IECA Foundation! You can access our online donation page using the QR code. If you have any questions or want to learn more about the IECA Foundation, please contact Program Director Sarah Swan ([SSwan@IECAFoundation.org](mailto:SSwan@IECAFoundation.org)).





# Introductions

## Please Welcome IECA's New Professional Members



**Joy Aden** (CO) worked for nearly 20 years in higher education administration with large state universities, private four-year colleges, and community colleges in both Colorado and the

Midwest before becoming an IEC. She is an expert in identifying support services that best complement student gifts and talents. Aden earned her master's in higher education/student services administration from Colorado State University and her bachelor's from Briar Cliff University. She is a member of NACAC and College Consultants of Colorado.

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**Jaya Anthony** (CA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for six years. Her experience includes positions in the tech and service industries, along with teaching and lecturing at

the London School of Economics International Expansion Program in Singapore. Volunteering and offering pro bono services has been an important piece of her background. Anthony earned a master's in economics and an IEC certificate from UC Irvine Extension, and attended IECA's 2018 Summer Training Institute. She is a member of WACAC.

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**Sylvia Borgo** (CA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for three years. She was a classroom teacher for 20 years, including 14 years at a college prep charter school for first-generation

students before becoming an IEC. A member of NACAC, Borgo earned her IEC certificate from UC Irvine Extension and her BA from UCLA. She volunteers as a scholars coach for the College Essay Guy and an essay coach for PICS, a San Diego-area CBO.

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With a BS in journalism from Ohio University and an MEd from UNSW Sydney, **Sara Cavalieri** (CA) worked in admissions for universities in the UK and Australia for more than

10 years, including the University of Edinburgh. Nowadays, as the founder of College Apps Abroad, Cavalieri specializes in helping US students apply to both undergraduate and master's programs overseas.

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**Michael Corbelle** (CO), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for two years. Before cofounding Cairn Educational Consulting, he worked in independent schools

for over a decade, most recently as director of outplacement at the Aspen Country Day School. Prior to that, he worked in boarding schools as a teacher, advisor, hockey coach, and in admissions. Corbelle holds an MEd in learning and teaching from Harvard University and a BA in government and legal studies from Bowdoin College.

*Michael Corbelle, MEd  
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Specialty: S*



**Melissa Figge** (CA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for eight years. She brings many years of experience as a professional school counselor and teacher at the secondary and

university level. A lifelong learner, she has credentials in pupil personnel services and secondary teaching, and earned an MS in school counseling from California State University and a BS from Whittier College. She attended IECA's 2015 Summer Training Institute and is a member of ASCA, CSCA, NACAC, and WACAC.

*Melissa Figge, MS  
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**Rebekah Jordan** (CT), a former Associate member, has over 25 years of experience in education as a teacher, head of school, tutor, division head, consultant, board member, and advisor.

Jordan holds a master's in educational leadership and a bachelor's in education and theater. A participant of IECA's 2021 Summer Training Institute, she chairs TCA's Business Training Committee and is a member of NATSAP, COPAA, and LDA.

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**Dana Ponsky** (NY), a former Associate member, has more than 20 years of experience in college and graduate school admissions, career counseling, and student development

services at both the high school and collegiate level. She holds an MA in college student personnel from Bowling Green State University, a BA from University of Maryland, and a post-master's certificate in enrollment management from University of Miami. She is the creator of the YouTube series, *Being Jewish in College: Kibbitz in 10 Minutes*, and a member of NACAC.

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**Patricia (Patty) LeCompte** (FL), a former Associate member, is an experienced educator, executive functions coach, and Myers-Briggs careers practitioner. She served

as a leadership instructor and DECA advisor, and was recognized as both the Pennsylvania and International Hospitality Teacher of the Year. LeCompte has an MEd in educational leadership and is a member of SACAC. She volunteers time to several charities, including serving as ambassador of her local Chamber of Commerce.

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**Katherine (Kathy) Ratajczak** (CA) has been an IEC for 10 years. Her background includes experience in college counseling for private high schools in the Greater Los Angeles area,

significant time as a college admissions reader, and 10 years as an educator.

Ratajczak received her MA in education from Pepperdine University and her BA from California State University, Northridge. She holds a certificate in college counseling from UCLA Extension and is a member of NACAC, WACAC, and the Association of College Counselors for Independent Schools.

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*KRAdmissions.com*  
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**Julie Pohl** (Washington, DC), a former Associate member, is energized by the life and career opportunities available to students. She applies over 13 years of experience

as an IEC to encourage and assist them in their journey throughout high school, the college application process, and also as college transfers and graduate applicants. Pohl earned her IEC certificate, with distinction, from UC Irvine Extension.

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*Specialty: C*



**Lisa Rouff** (NC), a former Associate member, has been a clinical psychologist for over 20 years. She joined SchoolMatch4u as an IEC four years ago. Her background equips her to

work with students with learning differences and mental health issues in an informed and compassionate way.

Rouff holds a PhD in clinical psychology from Northwestern University, an undergraduate degree from the University of Chicago, and an IEC certificate from UC Irvine Extension. A member of SACAC, Rouff is cohost of the podcast, *Your College-Bound Kid*.

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**Amanda Rudolph Schwartz** (CA), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for eight years. She began her career as a writer, contributing to many publications and helping to launch E! Online, where she found her niche covering coming-of-age television series. Her love of writing, combined with an eagerness to help adolescents find their voices, provided the framework for a new career as an IEC. Schwartz is a member of WACAC and a volunteer with Write Girl and Milken Scholars.

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*Specialty: C*



**Dave Tyson** (NC), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for four years, following a 25-year career as a technology executive for Bank of America. In that role, he honed his skill in capturing and analyzing data and summarizing it into clear, usable facts, and helped to create various college recruiting programs.

Tyson holds a BS in computer information systems from Indiana University and an IEC certificate from UC Irvine Extension. He organizes information sessions for high school students and their families as part of the Service Unit outreach program in Monroe, North Carolina.

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**Nicole Smith** (NJ) has more than 25 years of experience, including work at Rutgers and Drexel Universities, NJ Blue Ribbon high schools, and the College Board headquarters. She earned a master's in counseling psychology with a specialization in school counseling from Boston University, and a BA in psychology from Drew University. She is a certified school counselor in NJ and was previously licensed as an associate counselor.

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*Specialty: C*



**Miranda Young** (CA) has been an IEC for seven years. Prior to cofounding Delta Squared Education, she worked at Duke University and UC Irvine creating and managing specialized master's degrees in business. Young earned an EdM from Harvard, an MMS from Duke, and a BA from UC Irvine. She has served as a board member of the UC Irvine Alumni Association and is an active member of Duke SoCal.

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**Megan (Meg) Stiphany** (NC), a former Associate member, has been an IEC for six years. Her experience in the education field includes admissions, student services, and career exploration at the University of Notre Dame, the University of Chicago, and La Lumiere Boarding School.

Stiphany earned an MBA from Indiana University and a BA from Aquinas College. She serves as a scholarship reviewer for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, as well as a fundraiser for their Light the Night campaign, and is a member of SBSA, SACAC, and EMA.

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*Specialties: S, G*

Are you a current Associate member of IECA, ready to work toward becoming a Professional member, demonstrating your professional mastery and years of experience?

Visit [link.IECAonline.com/A2P](https://link.IECAonline.com/A2P) for information and member-to-member tips on how to make this transition. Contact IECA's Membership Manager Caitlin Myers ([Caitlin@IECAonline.com](mailto:Caitlin@IECAonline.com)) with any questions—we are here to help!

# Campus Visits

There was so much interest in the **IECA 2023 Fall College Tour: Pittsburgh to Cincinnati** in September that we repeated it again in October! Thanks to everyone who participated in the tours, and to the colleges and universities for being such gracious hosts.

Colleges on the tours included: Carnegie Mellon University, University of Pittsburgh, Washington & Jefferson College, Duquesne University, Case Western Reserve University, Ohio State University, University of Dayton, Miami University, and University of Cincinnati.

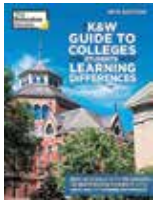
## Save the Date!

### Red, White & Blues College Tour – Spring 2024

The IECA College Committee and IECA staff are excited to offer a five-day spring tour of 10 colleges in Alabama, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, available to current IECA Professional and Associate members. More information will be available in early 2024.



# Initiatives



◀ **Marybeth Kravets** (IL) and **Imy Wax** (IL) published the 16th edition of their indispensable resource, *The K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Differences: 350+ Schools with Programs or Services for Students with ADHD, ASD, or Learning Differences* in August 2023.




◀ **Sally Springer** (CA), **Nancy Griesemer** (VA), and retired member **Joyce Vining Morgan** published the 5th edition of their accessible and authoritative guide, *Admission Matters: What Students and Parents Need to Know About Getting Into College* in August 2023.

Congratulations to **Alexandra Dumas Rhodes** (CA), who published *The Only College Admissions Writing Guide You Need: The Personal Statement, A 14-Day Interactive Workbook* in August 2023.



◀ **Joan Koven** (PA), **Stephanie Klein Wassink** (CT), and **Amy Jasper** (VA), along with CEO **Mark Sklarow**, led a successful one-day Transitioning to Private Practice College Consulting workshop for 30 participants as part of the NACAC 2023 conference.

Attendees left with a great sense of the IEC profession and IECA's commitment to remaining at the forefront of ethical standards of practice. Staff also enjoyed connecting with them again at the IECA booth in the Exhibit Hall and providing additional information on next steps to enter the profession. 

## Advertiser Index

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Altior Healthcare	20	<a href="http://AltiorHealthcare.com">AltiorHealthcare.com</a>
Bard College at Simon's Rock	39	<a href="http://Simons-Rock.edu">Simons-Rock.edu</a>
Bocconi University	22	<a href="http://UniBocconi.eu">UniBocconi.eu</a>
Compass Rose	10	<a href="http://CompassRoseAcademy.org">CompassRoseAcademy.org</a>
CooperRiis Healing Community	27	<a href="http://CooperRiis.org">CooperRiis.org</a>
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University of Southampton	40	<a href="http://Southampton.ac.uk">Southampton.ac.uk</a>

## Spotlight on the Transfer Students Affinity Group

By Jaime Smith, MA, MSEd, CEP, IECA (OR) and Priscilla Vivio, MEd, CEP, IECA (WA), Co-Chairs

According to the National Student Clearinghouse, approximately one-third of college students transfer schools before earning their undergraduate degree. In fall 2021, this amounted to 1.2 million undergraduates enrolled as transfer-in students to more than 3,400 institutions ([NCES.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/answer/2/4](https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/answer/2/4)). Whether the reason for transferring is driven by finances, the student not finding the right environment at their initial college, a change in major, or another reason, these staggering numbers show there is a clear demand for IECs to keep up with unique needs of transfer students.

Seeing this need, we co-founded the IECA Transfer Students Affinity Group in December 2021. Our group provides support and discussion for IECs who work with (or want to work with) college students exploring

undergraduate transfer opportunities. This includes both planned transfers (students attending two-year colleges with the stated goal of applying to four-year universities) and unplanned transfers (students switching schools or returning to a different school for any number of reasons). Our affinity group, now 250 members strong (and growing!), meets monthly, often with a transfer-focused presentation by a college admission representative.

We invite you to join our active group of transfer specialists, or reach out to one of us if you are referring a student who has expressed interest in changing institutions!

To join the Transfer Students Affinity Group, go to: [network.IECAonline.com/communities/AffinityGroups](https://network.IECAonline.com/communities/AffinityGroups)



Jaime Smith, Jaime Smith Consulting, can be reached at [Jaime@JSmithIEC.com](mailto:Jaime@JSmithIEC.com).



Priscilla Vivio, On My Way Consulting, can be reached at [Priscilla@OnMyWayConsulting.com](mailto:Priscilla@OnMyWayConsulting.com).

## Connect with Your Colleagues in an 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](https://network.IECAonline.com/communities/AffinityGroups)

To create a new Affinity Group, contact Tanesha Norman, IECA's member experience manager, at [Tanesha@IECAonline.com](mailto:Tanesha@IECAonline.com).

### Business-Focused Groups

- Best Notes Users
- Cialfo Users
- Large IEC Business
- Technology for IEC Practices
- TestPreppers

### Identity-Based Groups

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

### Groups Based on Student Populations

- College Affordability
- Day School Consulting
- Gap Year Information and Resources
- GuidedPath Users
- Homeschooling
- IECs Advising College-Bound Student Athletes
- IECs Serving Families of Active Christian Faith
- IECs Who Give Back
- Intellectual Disabilities and ASD
- Performing and Visual Arts
- Rural/Small Town Students
- Supporting Students Crossing Borders
- Transfer Students
- Working with Chinese Students & Families
- Working with Gifted/Talented and Twice-Exceptional Students

# 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](https://network.IECAonline.com/communities/RegionalGroups)

To start a group in your area, contact Tanesha Norman, IECA's member experience manager, at [Tanesha@IECAonline.com](mailto:Tanesha@IECAonline.com).



On July 27, 2023, Emerson College hosted members of the IECA Greater Los Angeles Regional Group for a tour of their LA campus.



Members of the Arizona Regional Group met for coffee and conversations at Regroup Coffee & Bicycles in Tempe, AZ on September 6, 2023. We were a small but mighty group!



In August 2023, members of the Central Texas Regional Group attended a back-to-school event hosted by several college admission officers, an in-person talk at the University of Texas at Austin, and a group happy hour.

## NEW GROUP!

### Central Virginia

IECA members based in Central Virginia are invited to join this new Regional Group. For more information and to get involved, contact Chair Ariana Williams ([Ariana@AWCollegeConsulting.com](mailto:Ariana@AWCollegeConsulting.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](https://link.IECAonline.com/regional)



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\*QS World University Rankings 2024

\*\*The Graduate Market in 2023, High Fliers Research