



# Ethics & Best Practices in College Admission Counseling

The National Association for College Admission Counseling

# Topics to Cover

- **Introduction to NACAC**
- **Section 1: The Ethical Core of College Admission**
  - Truthfulness and Transparency
  - Professional Conduct
  - Confidentiality
- **Section 2: The Responsible Practice of College Admission**
  - Admission Cycle Dates, Deadlines, and Procedures for First Time Fall Entry Undergraduates
  - Wait Lists
- **Section 3: Application Plans & Glossary of Terms**
  - Application Plans
  - Glossary of Terms
- **Questions?**



# What is NACAC?

- Founded in 1937
- Non-profit, non-governmental, membership organization
- Focus on transition to post-secondary education (within the undergraduate level)
- Membership experience, training & education, policy & advocacy, research and grants, events & conference

## MISSION

Empowering college admission counseling professionals through education, advocacy, and community.

NACAC

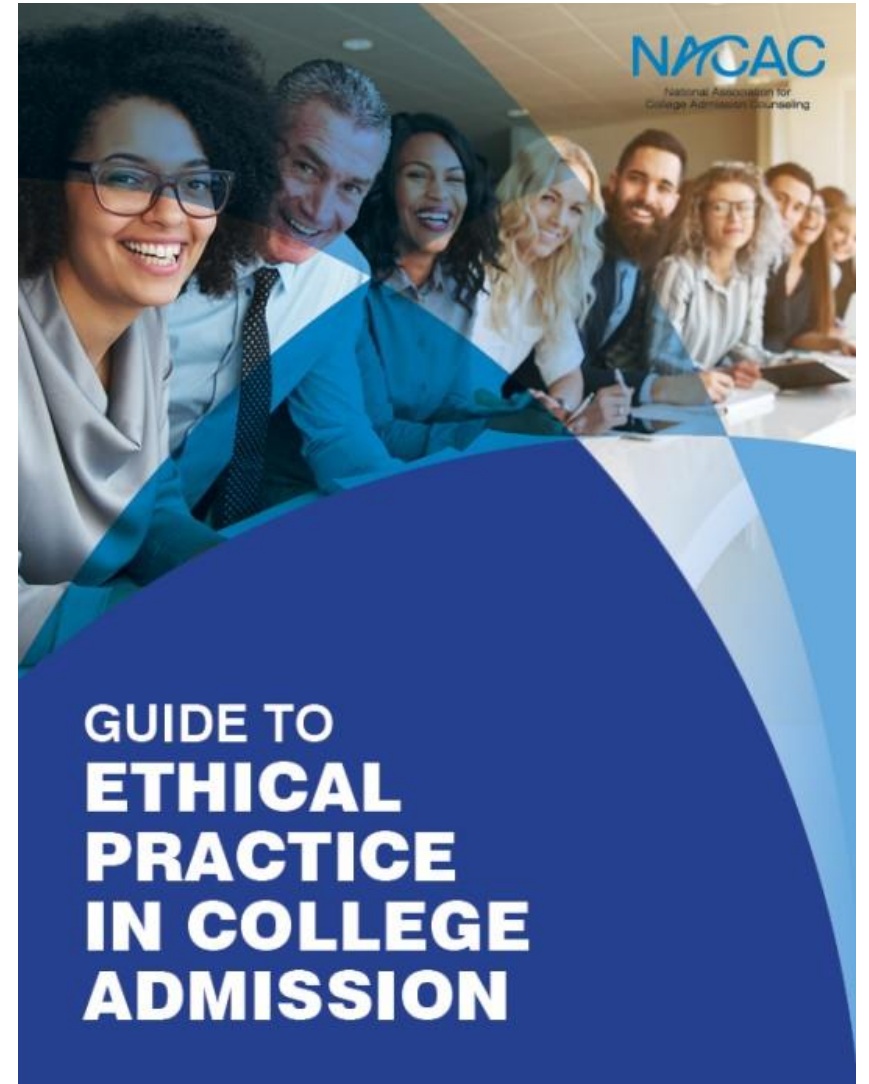
## VISION

The transformative power of postsecondary education is accessible to all.

NACAC

# Background

- History of Code of Ethics and Professional Practices (CEPP)
- Department of Justice investigation
- March 2020: CEPP recast as statement of best practices (SPGP)
- June 2020: Admission Practices Committee creates the Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission



The Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission reflects the association's long-standing commitment to principled conduct among professionals who support students in the college transition process from secondary to postsecondary education and in the transfer process between postsecondary institutions.



# Tenets of the Guide

- Education
- Access & Equity
- Professionalism
- Collegiality
- Collaboration
- Trust
- Social Responsibility



# Section 1: The Ethical Core of College Admission



# Truthfulness and Transparency: Guiding Principles and Rationale

College admission professionals should provide **comprehensive, truthful, and factual information** that will allow parties to make **informed decisions**.



Share relevant and up-to-date information about students free from misrepresentation.



Accurately describe school/institution to both students and peers.



Provide accurate and comprehensive transcripts and other school documents.



Be transparent about where transcript data was gathered, including gaps in the data.



Ensure that third party representatives follow ethical best practices.



Monitor institutions for accurate information; deadlines, admission factors, academic majors, cost, etc.



# Professional Conduct: Guiding Principles and Rationale

## **Advocating for a student's best interest in the admission process is the primary ethical concern for college admission professionals.**

- Students should receive college admission counseling they can trust.
- Conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived, and unprofessional conduct undermine that trust.
- Schools, organizations, institutions, and agencies should work together in an environment that fosters trust.



Educate students on unethical behavior as it relates to applications.



Do not use incentive payments based on the number of students recruited or enrolled.



Do not offer or accept an award to influence an admission, financial aid, or enrollment decision.



Do not disseminate inaccurate, misleading, or disparaging information about other institutions.

# Confidentiality: Guiding Principles and Rationale

The college admission and counseling community depends on **trust**. An important component in building this trust is **maintaining confidentiality**.



Send and receive information on candidates in confidence and protect the confidentiality of all shared information.



Adhere to school/institution's policies for confidentiality.



Do not divulge a student's college application status, admission, financial aid offer, etc. without the permission of the student.



Do not ask candidates, their counselors, their schools, or others to divulge or rank order their college preferences on applications or other documents.

# Section 2: The Responsible Practice of College Admission



# Admission Cycle Dates, Deadlines, and Procedures for First Time Fall Entry Undergraduates

- College choices should be **informed, well considered, and free from coercion.**
- Admission practices should be **student centered.**
- Students benefit from an **organized and developmentally appropriate schedule.**
- Counselors are encouraged to work with campus offices to create **consistent deadlines.**

# Recommended Dates and Deadlines



- **Application deadline: October 15th** should be the earliest deadline colleges set.
- **National Candidates Reply Date:** Colleges should use the widely accepted date of **May 1** as the earliest enrollment confirmation deadline.
  - Before being asked to make a decision, students should have time to hear from each school and receive notice of financial aid offers, admission to honors or special programs, and housing.

# Admission Cycle Dates, Deadlines

- **Notification of Admission:**  
Colleges should notify candidates no earlier than after the official completion of their junior year of secondary school or its equivalent.
- **Wait List Notification: August 1**  
should be the final date for notifying all candidates remaining on the waitlist of the final decision regarding fall admission to the institution.



# Wait Lists

Wait lists help colleges manage their enrollments and give students who were not initially admitted another opportunity to be considered for admission. By placing a student on the wait list, a college does not initially offer or deny admission but extends to the candidate the possibility of admission should space become available. Timely offers of admission from the wait list serve both institutions and students.

## Universities should:

- Include the historical range in numbers or percentages of students offered admission from the wait list + availability of housing/financial aid with waitlist offer.
- Not require a deposit or set fee to remain on the wait list.
- Allow students who are offered admission from the wait list after May 1 **at least 48 hours** before requiring a verbal or written commitment to enroll.
- Notify students of their financial aid offer and availability of housing before requiring a commitment to enroll.
- Notify all wait list candidates of the final decision no later than **August 1.**



# Section 3: Application Plans





# Application Plans

NACAC members believe it benefits members and the students they serve when there is clarity and consistency to a process that can be complicated and confusing. To help clarify the process, members are encouraged to use the following definitions for application plans and other admission terms.



## **Non-restrictive application plans:**

Colleges allow students filing applications using one of these non-restrictive plans to submit applications to multiple institutions. It is recommended that colleges allow students who are offered enrollment using one of these plans until at least May 1 to confirm their intent to enroll. Colleges should disclose whether admission to their institution or to any of their programs or majors or selection for scholarships is on a first-come, first-served basis.

- **Early Action (EA):** Students apply by an earlier deadline to receive a decision in advance of the college's Regular Decision notification date.
- **Regular Decision (RD):** Students submit their applications by a specified deadline and are notified of a decision within a clearly stated period of time.
- **Rolling Admission (RA):** Students apply at any time after a college begins accepting applications until a final closing date, which may be as late as after the start of the term for which they are applying. Students are notified of a decision as their applications are completed and are reviewed.

# Restrictive Application Plans

## Early Decision (ED):

Students commit to a first-choice college at the time of application and, if admitted, agree to enroll and withdraw their other college applications. Colleges may offer ED I or II with different deadlines. Students may be required to accept a college's offer of admission and submit a deposit prior to May 1.

## **Colleges using an Early Decision application should:**

- Not make Early Decision the only application option for admission.
- Notify candidates of the admission decision within a clearly stated period.
- Respond to an application for financial aid at or near the time of an offer of admission and before a deposit is required.
- Release applicants from the Early Decision agreement if the candidate is
  - Denied admission.
  - Deferred to an admission date other than that stated on the original application.
  - Offered a program or major that is different from that stated on the original application.
- State any admission preferences for specific applicant populations, such as legacies (typically siblings or the offspring of alumni/ae) or recruited athletes.
- State if admission preferences are available only to Early Decision candidates.



# Restrictive Application Plans

## Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action (REA):

Students apply to a college of preference and receive an admission decision in advance of the Regular Decision notification date. Colleges place certain restrictions on applying under other early application plans.

- Students admitted under Restrictive Early Action should be allowed until May 1 to accept the college's offer of admission or to submit a deposit.
- Colleges with Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action should not restrict students from applying under other colleges' Regular or Rolling application plans.
- Colleges should clearly articulate their restrictions in their Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action policies and agreements with students.



# Questions?

## Feel free to contact us

### **Murphy Miller**

Senior Manager, Membership Experience  
[mmiller@nacacnet.org](mailto:mmiller@nacacnet.org)

### **Cameron Hair**

Research and Grants Associate  
[chair@nacacnet.org](mailto:chair@nacacnet.org)  
Twitter: @CameronNoelleH

FMI: [Membership@nacacnet.org](mailto:Membership@nacacnet.org)



**NACAC**