Ad Hoc Committee on

Leadership in College Admission

Process, Findings, and Recommendations

2020

NACAC

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WHO WE ARE

This committee comprises 14 individuals from varied backgrounds and settings, bringing a range of viewpoints and dissenting opinions to our discussions. While our current titles and employers are listed below, many of our career paths have included previous roles in secondary and postsecondary institutions and community-based organizations.

Committee Members:

- **Angel B. Pérez**, Committee Chair, NACAC CEO (Vice President for Enrollment and Student Success, Trinity College (CT) at the time of issuance)
- **Ken Anselment**, Vice President for Enrollment and Communication, Lawrence University (WI)
- **Jon Boeckenstedt**, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, Oregon State University
- **Rick Clark**, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Georgia Institute of Technology
- **Rafael Figueroa**, Dean of College Guidance, Albuquerque Academy (NM)
- **Marquita Guzman**, High School Counselor on Special Assignment, Portland Public Schools (OR)
- **Amy Jarich**, International Specialist, University of California, Berkeley
- **Cassie Magesis**, Director of Postsecondary Access, The Urban Assembly (NY)
- **Janet Marling**, Executive Director, National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students
- **Katy Murphy**, Director of College Counseling, Bellarmine College Preparatory (CA)
- **Ffiona Rees**, Senior Associate Director, Evaluation and International Admission
- **Tevera Stith**, Vice President of KIPP Through College & Career, KIPP DC
- **Mitchell Thompson**, Dean of Students, Scarsdale High School (NY)
- **Kimberly Urenda**, School Counselor, Shawnee Mission West High School (KS)

Two NACAC staff members provided primary support to the committee:
- **Joyce Smith**, Former CEO
- **David Hawkins**, Executive Director for Educational Content and Policy

The committee was also supported by McKinley Advisors, an association strategy consulting firm:
- **George Miller**, Senior Consultant
- **Eileen Dolan**, Senior Project Associate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) national conference held in Louisville in September 2019, President Jayne Caflin Fonash announced the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Leadership in College Admission. We, the committee, were appointed to address questions that have been buffeting our institutions and professional organizations for years, that pose challenges to the work we do and the students we serve. **Our ultimate charge was to answer the overarching question: What does the future of accessible, inclusive, equitable and affordable postsecondary education look like, and what does NACAC need to change to make that a reality?** We used the year 2030 to frame our conversations around our charge.

> *"I have friends who have already been told they won't have their positions next year. I see the high schools that are really suffering."*
> *–Committee member (April 2020)*

We had made significant progress on our charge when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the profession and the entire world. We were faced with the question of whether our draft findings and recommendations still made sense as campuses swiftly closed, many students shifted to online learning, and the future of higher education was immediately put into jeopardy.

Then, several weeks into the pandemic, civil unrest erupted around the United States as news of unconscionable acts of racism emerged.[1] Protests against police brutality and institutionalized racism ensued in every state across the United States as Americans came together to march for justice in unprecedented numbers.

> *"If we don't take a stand and address that (public funding) and make that our uber priority we are really just grasping at straws."*
> *–Committee member (April 2020)*

To not consider the impact of these events would be irresponsible. The pandemic intensified existing inequities in all aspects of society as disparities in financial means, access to healthcare, access to technology and learning environments continue to widen. This particularly rings true for America's communities of color, who face high numbers of coronavirus cases as well as catastrophic job losses. These growing inequities will inevitably create additional obstacles in the college admission process for many.

While the pandemic initially sparked conversations around "how" we should do our work to bridge these inequities, the acts of racism and the social unrest that ensued validated the "why" behind our work. These events demonstrate how rapidly the world is changing, impacting the educational landscape and admission profession along with it. Thus, it is without question that our initial charge to re-imagine a postsecondary education that is accessible, inclusive, equitable, and affordable is more crucial now than ever.

Through this lens we have identified the following strategic drivers as the five areas that will require extraordinary time, talent, and resources from NACAC. These interrelated strategic drivers, or themes, form the basis of our recommendations.

> *"Our strategic intent, or vision, should be something everyone in our organization can memorize and recite easily."*
> *–Committee member (February 2020)*

Mission and Vision Clarity: In February, we agreed that NACAC's Board of Directors must revisit the organization's mission and vision statements to ensure they remain relevant, agile, and include a focus on higher education as a public good. The words "public good" were intentional as we also recognized a need for

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[1] Among others, the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery sparked protests during the pandemic.

greater focus on public policy efforts. Today, NACAC's role in advocating for the future of higher education has never been needed more, and the mission and vision need to reflect that imperative.

Transparency: Prior to recent events, we discussed a need for greater transparency in NACAC; examples surrounded the Board's decision-making process, the need for enhanced communication with affiliates, and NACAC's role in collecting and disseminating data regarding ever-changing admission policies. Today, those examples still ring true as the need for transparency is even greater.

Members are hungry for information about how COVID-19 is impacting the future of higher education, and desperately need leadership, guidance, and resources from NACAC.

"NACAC should be the authority on college access at all levels— access means access for everyone."
–Committee member (February 2020)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: From the onset, we recognized that the organization needed to double down on its work to end inequities in higher education and foster a more inclusive and diverse membership. Examples discussed included examining issues surrounding exclusion, promoting leadership opportunities for the next generation of admission and counseling professionals, and supporting multiple points of entry in higher education. As the pandemic and acts of police violence further intensified inequities, we see this priority as more critical than ever.

"We need to play a leading role in higher and postsecondary education policy by disseminating topical and timely information in the ways people like to consume it."
–Committee member (February 2020)

"The overarching theme is how do we become nimbler? If we are going to be more proactive in meeting the needs of our members, students, and families, we need to be more agile."
–Committee member (February 2020)

Knowledge Source: In our early discussions, there was consensus that NACAC should be the premier resource for best practices, innovations, and information for professionals, students, and families. Prior to COVID-19, examples cited included being a trusted source to the media, providing collaborative discussion forums for thought leaders, and supplying neutral data, information, and accessible resources.

The pandemic magnified this driver as professionals, students and families need a reliable source to turn to as they navigate uncharted territory.

Technology: Early conversations centered on how NACAC needs to improve internal systems in order to provide relevant content and ensure seamless access to information. As our stakeholders have shifted to virtual environments, with no clear end in sight, NACAC must invest in a digital transformation. ▪

HISTORY, CONTEXT, AND WHAT WE BELIEVE

Postsecondary education has changed irrevocably between 1937, the year NACAC was incorporated, and the present. Enrollment in postsecondary education has grown by more than 700 percent since 1947.[2] The "system" of undergraduate higher education in the United States, such as it is, is an assortment of more than 4,000 institutions, that include career and technical, liberal arts, research, and comprehensive colleges; two- and four-year colleges; and public, private, non-profit, and for-profit colleges.[3] The number of colleges has grown by 118 percent between 1947 and today. In fact, there is no "system" of higher education in the United States, with the exception of a collection of state higher education systems, some more tightly coordinated than others.

HIGHER EDUCATION AS A MASS MARKET

In fact, there are as many pathways to and through higher ed as there are students. The increase in enrollment has transformed college admission from the small, intimate affair of the early 1900s into a mass market, with billions of dollars at stake and an entire industry centered on matching students with colleges. Standardized admission test agencies alone generate more than $1 billion in revenue each year. Add to that the test preparation industry, the network of marketing, recruiting, and consulting firms, technology and CRM companies, lead generation companies, and related businesses, and the total soars into the tens of billions. Finally, the imperative of enrolling a sufficient number of students to maintain a sound bottom line generates billions more in tuition and revenue for colleges and universities themselves, much of that now also flowing through public and private student loan providers due to a shift in public policy toward viewing higher education as a private good.

Total Enrollment, United States Postsecondary Education, 1947–2019

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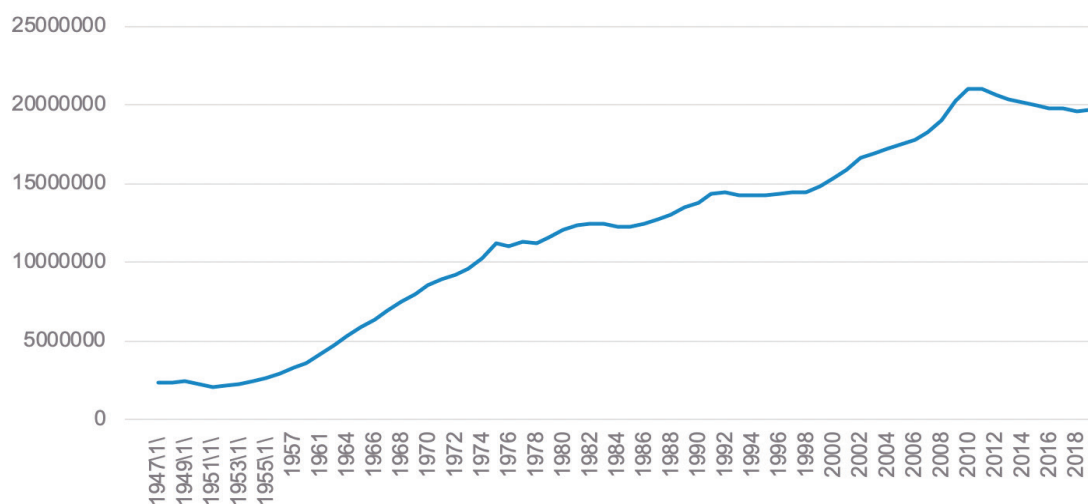
[2] US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Biennial Survey of Education in the United States; Opening Fall Enrollment in Higher Education, 1963 through 1965; Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1966 through 1985; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:86-99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2019, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, 2000 through 2029.

[3] US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Directory, Colleges and Universities, 1949–50 through 1965–66; Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Institutional Characteristics of Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1966–67 through 1985–86; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Institutional Characteristics Survey"(IPEDS-IC:86-99); and IPEDS Fall 2000 through Fall 2018, Institutional Characteristics component.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIABLE, ACCURATE INFORMATION

As with any mass market, information asymmetry between colleges and students, compounded by the lack of access to school counselors and college advisors, creates an environment in which students and families must navigate processes often beyond their ability to fathom. In the previous decade alone, state and federal governments have created new resources or overhauled rules pertaining to basic college information (the Department of Education's "College Scorecard"), student loan disclosures, financial aid award letters, misrepresentation, and high-pressure sales tactics in admission and recruitment. In the private sector, the market for college information remains robust. College rankings transformed from the domain of a few entrenched publications to a cottage industry involving online lead generators, lifestyle magazines, and information providers that span the range of expertise and interests. In short, the "market" for college information is vast and still marked by a significant caveat emptor.

> Thus, we determined that it is critical that NACAC should continue to nurture its role as a transparent knowledge source within the profession, the public, the media and the government.

THE VALUE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The market for college information is robust because the value of a postsecondary degree remains high. The payoff includes higher earnings; more participation in civic society; greater efficacy in political and personal life; greater satisfaction with life; and a host of other benefits. And society benefits from citizens with advanced education—more skills, greater political engagement, better earnings (and therefore taxes), improved self-sufficiency, less imprisonment, and reduced need for some social safety net programs.[4]

> The members of this committee stand firm in our belief that higher education is a public good.

INEQUITABLE ACCESS

Yet while many Americans view higher education—and education overall—as both a means for upward mobility and a public good, our public policy has not corrected for calcified social stratification and has increasingly treated postsecondary education as a private good. As a result, and despite passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Higher Education Act of 1965, the equity gap in education overall remains stubbornly persistent, and the increased cost of attending college threatens to shut more students out of higher education. Yet the college admission counseling profession is still confronted by those who believe that students' race and ethnicity are immaterial to the college admission decision, and who refuse to acknowledge the systemic prejudice engrained in our education systems, beginning well before students reach college. Further exacerbating equity in higher education, state and federal support have declined per capita as a significant share of the increase in enrollment is attributable to low-income students, placing further demands on many institutions' ability to support students with financial assistance.[5]
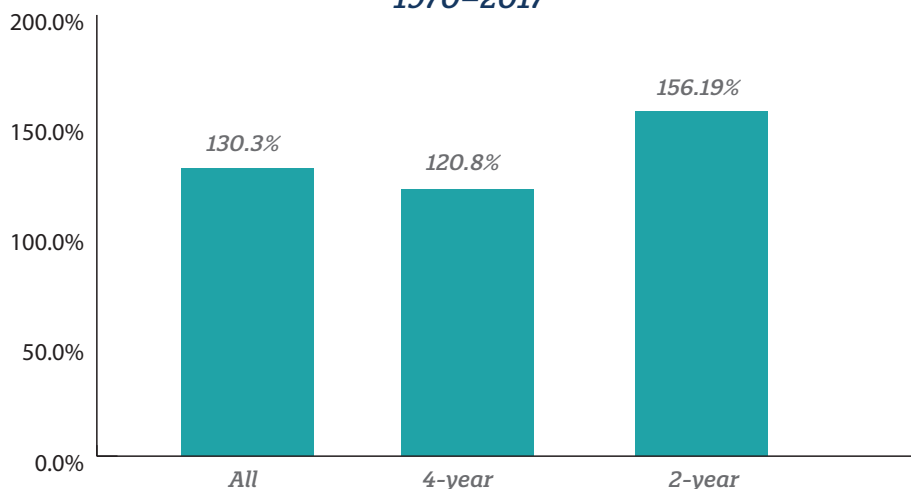
HIGHER ED AS A 'PRIVATE GOOD'

This "private good" orientation for higher education has stranded postsecondary institutions in a no-man's-land, where they must compete and generate revenue as if they are selling private goods yet are governed and regulated as if they are public entities. The long-festering debate over the allocation of institutional aid dollars, for instance, is a predictable outgrowth of a public policy orientation in the US that lacks a clear or adequate baseline for our collective investment in making college affordable for any student who seeks it. State and federal governments undeniably invest billions of dollars in postsecondary education but demand far outstrips supply.

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4   College Board, Trends in Higher Education Series: "Education Pays," December 2019.

5   "Funding Down, Tuition Up," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, August 2016; downloaded from
     https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/funding-down-tuition-up

Enrollment Growth at Postsecondary Institutions, 1970–2017

	All	4-year	2-year
Growth	130.3%	120.8%	156.19%

Even for privileged families, the high cost of postsecondary education is beginning to create doubt that the value is worth the cost. Worse, unscrupulous colleges—at times sanctioned by state and federal governments—prey on vulnerable students, with predictably disastrous results, further damaging people's trust in higher education and depleting our scarce public resources. [6]

As if to emphasize the commercial nature of college admission, the Department of Justice investigation into NACAC's code of ethics on restraint-of-trade grounds has resulted in an irreversible change in direction for NACAC—one that seems destined to move us beyond a role in which we self-regulate, to one in which we must advocate and rely on our core values to represent what is good and noble in higher education admission, while also naming what is wrong and detrimental.
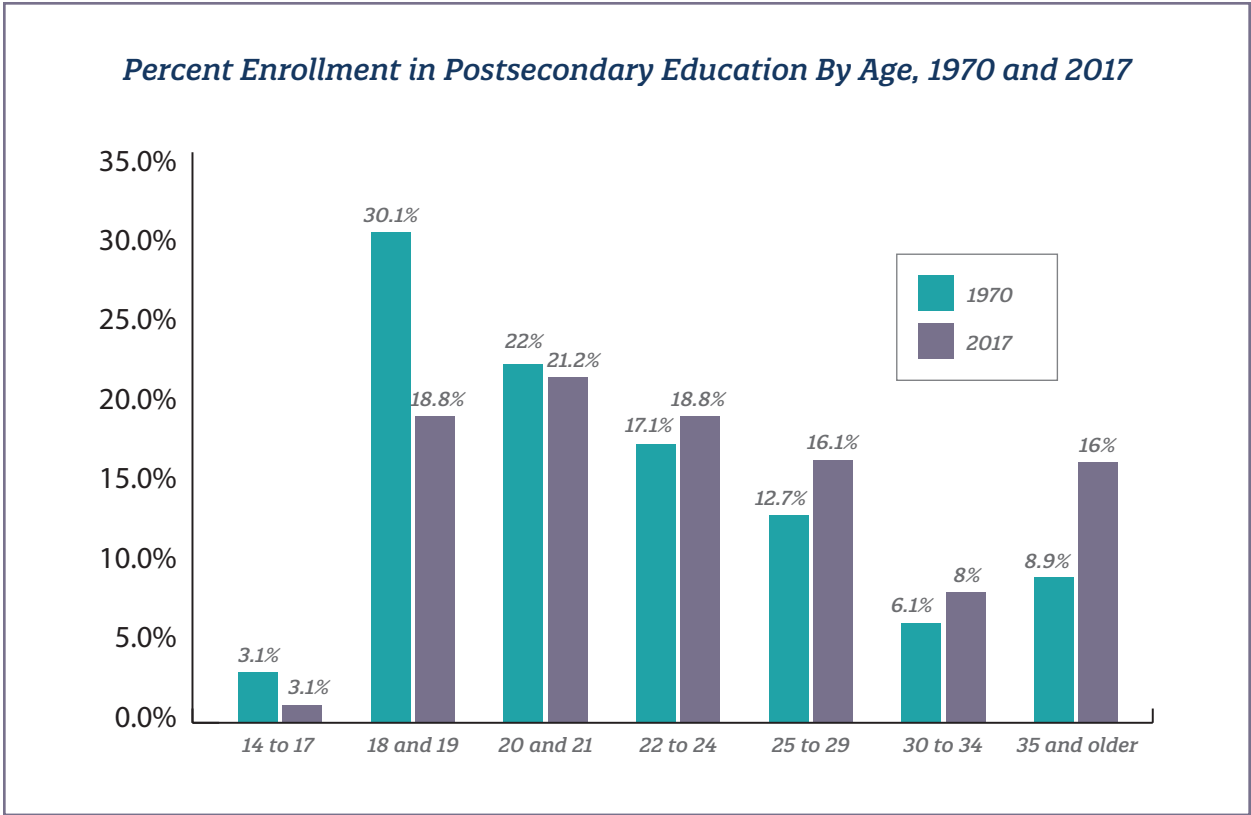
> While we maintain that our *Code of Ethics and Professional Practices (CEPP)* has always been about maintaining a student-centered approach to advising, recruitment, and admission, we must now determine how best to represent this position in a decidedly commercial context.

Whether this commercial orientation persists, however, remains to be seen. As it currently stands, the legitimacy of higher education rests on its ability to convey a high-quality education to as many students as are interested in receiving it. Resting our nation's future on a simple commercial premise is not likely to achieve our goal.

UNCERTAINTY AND INSTABILITY

The modern era of college admission has been marked by uncertainty. The mass market of higher ed has fostered a commercial, commodified view of admission to college in much of the popular conscience. Increased competition among colleges and technological changes have prompted unprecedented numbers of applications for admission from students, which in turn has created immense uncertainty among colleges. Yield rates at four-year colleges have endured a sustained decline, causing them to struggle to find new ways to fill seats while working with budgets that do not keep pace with needs. Colleges and students each play roles in upping the ante, as many colleges seek ever-increasing application numbers and lower acceptance rates, while advantaged students match their moves with countermoves of their own.

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[6] See: "For Profit Higher Education: The Failure to Safeguard the Federal Investment and Ensure Student Success," Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, July 30, 2012. *https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/for_profit_report/PartI-PartIII-SelectedAppendixes.pdf*

Percent Enrollment in Postsecondary Education By Age, 1970 and 2017

Age	1970	2017
14 to 17	3.1%	3.1%
18 and 19	30.1%	18.8%
20 and 21	22%	21.2%
22 to 24	17.1%	18.8%
25 to 29	12.7%	16.1%
30 to 34	6.1%	8%
35 and older	8.9%	16%

In contrast, enrollment in public two-year colleges has increased 160 percent since 1970. In fact, the growth in two-year enrollment overall has outpaced the growth in four-year enrollment since 1970.[7]

In addition, the "average" college student was significantly older in 2017 than in 1970, signifying a shift toward college as a form of lifelong learning and away from college as the exclusively residential, four-year experience.[8] College has also become more portable, as millions of students transfer credits from one institution to another during their postsecondary experience, either vertical (two- to four-year), lateral (two- to two-year or four- to four-year), or reverse transfer (four- to two-year).

THE COVID-19 LEGACY

Superimposed on this context now is the as-yet-unknown legacy of COVID-19. This unprecedented disruption has rendered many of our personal and our professional rhythms obsolete during this crisis; exposed flaws and exacerbated inequities in our system; and has forced us to ask difficult questions about whether our previous models are applicable to an uncertain future. ■

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[7]   SOURCE: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Institutions of Higher Education" surveys, 1970 through 1985; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:86-99); and IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2018, Fall Enrollment component.

[8]   SOURCE: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1970 and 1980; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:90-99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2018, Fall

THE STATE OF ASSOCIATIONS

Each year, 63,000 trade and professional associations serve millions of American workers across every industry and state.[9] Professional membership associations, like many other organizations, are facing extraordinary disruption. Our committee was formed to meet the evolving needs of NACAC's membership, and given the challenges created by COVID-19, it is more pressing than ever. Research conducted by McKinley Advisors reveal the themes below that members expect from their associations, providing guiding principles for NACAC as it looks to reinvent itself.

In the book, *The Will to Govern Well: Knowledge, Trust, and Nimbleness,* authors Tecker, Frankel, and Meyer write, "If an association does not keep up with the rapidly increasing segmentation of those it serves and becomes irrelevant in the eyes of its members, it may experience radical change in the nature and character of its enterprise.[10] Relevance is an enormous issue for associations. Absent a vision—a sense of direction—an association can exist only in a constantly reactive mode."

"I think NACAC needs to step back and assess our priorities and ethical standards in light of real-world realities, genuine ethics, and the diverse nature of the institutions that comprise NACAC membership."
        –Survey Respondent

As previously noted, one of the strategic drivers we discussed was revisiting NACAC's mission and vision statements to ensure that the organization remains in alignment with member needs and expectations. Associations have the potential to make a huge difference in society, and NACAC's role in the evolution of the higher education landscape is more important than ever. Yet in order for the profession to be successful, it must change course. The committee sought to understand the critical needs of the membership in order to make informed imperatives for a path forward. Against this backdrop, we have drafted recommendations (see page 11) to equip the organization to tackle our most pressing challenges. ■

What do members expect? Characteristics of a 21st-Century-Association

Mobile	*Diverse and inclusive*	*Central to member needs*	*Explicitly valuable*
Dynamic and experimental	*Responsive*	*Frictionless*	*Focused*
Resonant	*Measurable*	*Impactful*	

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9   ASAE The Center for Association Leadership, The Power of A–2020 *https://www.thepowerofa.org/power-of-a-research/*

10   Tecker, G. H. (2010). *The Will to Govern Well: Knowledge, Trust, and Nimbleness.* Washington, DC: ASAE Center for Association Leadership.

OUR TIMELINE AND PROCESS

PROJECT TIMELINE

Key phases of this effort include:

Committee Members Announced
November

Kickoff Call
November

Membership Survey Fielded
December–January

Planning Meeting
February

White Paper Drafted
March–April

White Paper Reviewed and Revised
April–May

White Paper Finalized and Endorsed
May–June

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

One of the first and most important stages of our work was making sure we heard from the membership, so we conducted a survey which was completed by more than 500 NACAC members. NACAC staff read and coded the comments based on recurring topics for each question. Aggregating the codes across questions revealed broader themes which are detailed below. We utilized these findings as a key component of our work.

• ***Focus on best practices:*** Member comments indicated support for a continued focus on best practices, particularly if NACAC can no longer enforce any aspects of the *CEPP*. There were many endorsements for transitioning the *CEPP* to a best practices document, but there also seemed to be confusion about what, if anything, could be enforced after the DOJ resolution.

• ***Stronger voice/media presence / advocate for professional values:*** Members expressed an interest in having NACAC have a stronger presence in the media and public sphere to help increase understanding about the college admission process. Comments suggested that NACAC could be a more proactive thought leader about issues affecting the college admission process, rather than merely reacting to external events.

• ***Transparency:*** The theme of transparency emerged in two ways. Members expressed a desire for more transparency from NACAC about internal deliberations, and secondary school members expressed a desire for NACAC to encourage college members to be transparent about their policies and practices.

"There should be clear and consistent communications to members by all channels available (twitter, email, website) about NACAC's recommendations or stances."
— *Survey Respondent*

• ***Focus on students / families:*** There were many mentions in the member comments about staying "student-centered," as a way to focus in on shared values. Members also thought that NACAC could serve both secondary members and students/families by providing education materials that would further empower students as "consumers" and prepare them for the potential of increased competitive practices among colleges.

• ***Diverse membership perspectives / inclusivity:*** Comments both acknowledged and reflected the sometimes vastly different perspectives and needs of

NACAC's member segments. There was concern about whether and how some of these conflicting priorities can be reconciled, noting that not all member segments are equally respected and served by NACAC.

"As the public demand for transparency in admission and financial aid grows, it will be helpful for NACAC to take a proactive approach to increase its role as an outward-facing entity that serves and informs students, families, and educators."
–Survey Respondent

• **Research/information collection and dissemination:** Members seemed to agree that it would be important to collect information to document any changes that occur in the college admission process as a result of the Department of Justice (DOJ) resolution. Members would like NACAC to be able to report over the next few years about the extent of changes and of how they have affected both students and professionals.

• **Education:** Member comments were positive about NACAC's professional development opportunities and called for an increased focus on educating members, particularly around best practices.

"I think you can still have a guide and principles of good practice even if they are optional and not enforced"
–Survey Respondent

IN-PERSON MEETING

Following this research effort, we participated in a two-day meeting and were led through a series of exercises and critical conversations to explore key questions, issues, opportunities, and strategies surrounding the future of NACAC and higher education.

At the beginning of the session we collaborated on ground rules to foster active listening, respectful and inclusive contributions, and blue sky thinking about "what could

be." As the committee is composed of individuals from a mix of backgrounds, we expressed different opinions and points of view which were challenged and debated. We experienced tension, laughter, frustration, inspiration and above all, a duty to remain focused on the collective good of the thousands of voices we represent.

Informed by the survey research, we considered key issues that NACAC must address. Discussions centered around NACAC's mission, the role of NACAC in college admission, ethical standards, public distrust, shifting demographics and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I).

Identifying what NACAC can control and influence, and equally important, what we cannot was our next task. We listed the various systems, people, and organizations that impact college admission. We were then asked to place our ideas into one of three categories: within our control; outside our immediate control, but which we can influence; everyone and everything else outside of our influence. This allowed us to acknowledge what NACAC is, and just as important, what we aren't. Both sobering and freeing, this exercise provided an important lens to guide ensuing conversations.

We were also asked to envision "the ideal NACAC of 2030," considering what the organization does, who it serves, its impact, and reputation. This was an exciting exercise as we each shared our unique aspirations for the organization. Together, we envision an organization that:

▪ Leads important initiatives resulting in a more diverse and inclusive student population

▪ Boldly influences higher education policy

▪ Serves as a clearinghouse for readily accessible knowledge sharing, transformative professional development opportunities, and cutting-edge research

▪ Boasts a membership that is reflective of the changing demographics of students.[11]

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[11] While we agreed that parents and students do not necessarily need to be members, we also envisioned an organization that would better serve this audience.

Thinking about the impact this "ideal NACAC" would have, we agreed that the organization would be the go-to, trusted resource for college admission questions, discussions, and issues. To achieve this desired future, we spent additional time acknowledging areas for improvement, including becoming more innovative, modern, and agile, strengthening NACAC's affiliate chapters and ensuring NACAC's offerings align with its mission. After discussing the ideal NACAC of the future, we briefly reviewed the organization's current mission and vision statements, considering if they still felt relevant based on preceding discussions.[12,13] Regarding the mission, a few members questioned the phrase, "NACAC defines professional standards," in light of the uncertain future of the *CEPP*. Additionally, some committee members felt the vision statement was too narrow, and others shared that the statement was too broad. Overall, there was consensus that the NACAC Board must revisit the organization's mission and vision statements.

Building on these discussions, we spent considerable time debating and choosing the most important strategic drivers (areas that require extraordinary time, talent, and resources) the organization should focus on in the future. There was no shortage of ideas, but we also recognized that NACAC does not have unlimited resources. We ultimately chose five we believe are crucial for investment in the future of accessible, inclusive, equitable, and affordable postsecondary education. As outlined in the Executive Summary, they are:

- Mission and vision clarity
- Transparency
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Knowledge source
- Technology

Using the framework of the five strategic drivers, our next task was to identify corresponding outcomes. As defined, outcomes are the "to what end" of a strategy and indicators of success that show a strategic driver is on track and advancing in the right direction. Outcomes include financial impacts, behavioral and perceptual change among key stakeholders, and an organization's quantifiable reach, influence, and impact. To generate outcomes, we worked in small groups to answer the question: *What does success look like?* As each small group reported out, we synthesized and prioritized the most important outcomes.

Nearing the end of our two-day meeting, we spent our remaining time brainstorming outputs. By definition, outputs are the incremental ways an organization advances strategy, realized through ongoing ideation, projects, key deliverables and milestones, and program/product/service development. To generate these tactical outputs, we again worked in small groups to answer the question: *What are those specific action items that are critical components for achieving the outcomes within each driver?* Like before, we synthesized and prioritized the most important outputs, and used the results of these exercises to inform our recommendations.

POST IN-PERSON MEETING

Following the meeting in February, the committee worked to refine recommendations. We reconvened on conference calls in March and April to validate the work we had accomplished to date and discuss any new thinking that had emerged. Specifically, we revisited our original charge through the lens of the unfolding pandemic. Additional feedback was incorporated in May and June to reflect current and substantial events. To that end, we present the recommendations below for the NACAC Board's consideration. ◾

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[12] Current Mission Statement: NACAC defines professional standards and provides leadership, knowledge, advocacy, research and a forum for collaboration to support admission and counseling professionals.

[13] Current Vision Statement: NACAC empowers admission and counseling professionals to champion the opportunity for all individuals to pursue higher education and aspire to lives of personal achievement and contribution to the public good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address the seismic changes higher education has and will experience, we came to the conclusion that a necessary precursor to addressing issues of substance was to position NACAC itself so it can address these issues in a systematic and sustained fashion.

- *Revise mission and vision statements to ensure relevancy:* We recommend that NACAC's Board of Directors revisit the organization's mission and vision statements to ensure relevancy and clarity given the changing higher education and college admission landscape. To ensure any changes resonate with stakeholders, NACAC should execute a listening campaign with members, students, families, and other key audiences prior to revising the statements.

- *Execute mission and vision statements communications campaign:* It is critical that the revised mission and vision statements are communicated to NACAC's membership and stakeholders in a timely manner through an integrated communications campaign. Not only does this ensure transparency around changes but it also encourages more familiarity with the revised statements.

- *Invest in initiatives that provide greater support to all students and families:* While we agreed that NACAC's primary purpose is to serve admission professionals and that students and families do not necessarily need to be members of the organization, there was consensus that NACAC must provide greater support to this group of stakeholders. As a first step, NACAC should conduct periodic research to obtain a better understanding of how the organization can provide greater support to students and families of all backgrounds throughout the admission process. Specific research themes might lead to increasing representation of CBOs within the organization, supporting different entry points in higher education, supporting students and professionals affected by college disruptions and closures, addressing systemic racism and discrimination, understanding shifting admission practices, and supporting consumer protection measures. Armed with this data, NACAC can serve as the authoritative voice on college admission providing the opportunity to influence state and federal legislative efforts through its advocacy and media initiatives. This is critically important given short and longer-term disruption caused by the pandemic. The organization should give additional thought to which specific data, tools and resources should be delivered directly to students, and families and which should be intended for use by affiliates and individual members.

- *Conduct a product and services audit to ensure core offerings align with revised mission and vision:* Powerful mission and vision statements, followed by action and behaviors consistent with the new statements, will establish follow-through, demonstrate transparency, and elevate trust. Thus, after the mission and vision statements are finalized and approved, NACAC must conduct an internal audit of its products and services to determine which of those align with the organization's new mission and vision statements. Offerings that do not align should be retooled or sunset, which may free up resources to develop new programs and member benefits.

• **_Conduct a technology audit, exploring new resources and partnerships for investment:_**
Investing in technology is important for any 21st-century association as well as a crucial component of ensuring greater transparency in the admission process. To gain a better understanding of NACAC's technology needs, the organization should conduct a technology audit, reviewing both internal and public facing systems. A technology audit conducted through the lens of the organization's strategic plan will allow NACAC to determine how and where to invest to improve operational efficiencies and capabilities, and ultimately deliver enhanced member value at a quicker pace. NACAC should also explore revenue generating partnerships with technology providers that will allow the organization to expand the resources and tools it can make available.

• **_Special Recommendations regarding_ CEPP:** Due to our concern about the future of _CEPP_ at the time of our in-person meeting, we debated this issue at length. After much deliberation, we unanimously agreed on two recommendations for the NACAC Board consideration, detailed below.
o We recommend the Board remove all mandatory statements from the _CEPP_ at the next board meeting.
o We recommend NACAC drafts, with deliberate speed, new guidance that:
   a) focuses on the best interests of students
   b) reflects the realities of professional members
   c) and promotes transparency and integrity in the college admission process.

These special recommendations were shared in advance and we are pleased that the NACAC Board, at its March 2020 meeting, voted to remove all mandatory statements from the _CEPP_ and replace them with best practices.

• **_Establish a standing practice to review governance systems every 5–7 years:_** An agile organization is best served by governance systems in which members see themselves represented, the collective voice of the membership is heard, and leaders are empowered to make important and timely decisions, particularly in times of crisis. With these ideas in mind, NACAC should conduct a governance audit and recommend systems improvements. A crucial component of the recommendations should be strengthening the state affiliates' ability to further the mission of NACAC at the local level. Establishing a regular cycle for governance review will safeguard continued success. ■

CONCLUSION

Given the recent changes in college admission, NACAC's Ad Hoc Committee on Leadership in College Admission was convened to tackle core questions about the future of the field and the organization. We are proud of the journey we took to present our membership with this white paper. Putting aside personal agendas, each one of us advocated for recommendations that are in the best interest of our members and the people we serve.

When we embarked on our charge to re-envision postsecondary education, we did not foresee a world entirely disrupted by COVID-19 or a country in civil unrest. In light of this, the recommendations in this white paper are even more urgent and imperative in order to shape a postsecondary education landscape that is accessible, inclusive, equitable and affordable for all. While we recognize that the timing of this white paper occurs during rapid shifts in our environment, we see this moment not as one to shrink from but rather one to embrace. NACAC has an opportunity right now to leverage the talent and resources within our organization to become the authoritative voice with policy makers and the media; to create greater avenues of access to education; and to collaborate with other organizations to affect positive change. We urge NACAC and its Board of Directors to utilize this paper as its guiding star during these turbulent, yet pivotal times.

NACAC has survived World War II, the Great Recession, the attacks on September 11, 2001, and many other crises. There are, no doubt, difficult times ahead as we better understand the legacy and implications of the last few months. However, if recent events have shown us anything, it is that we are stronger together. Our members have always come together in formal and informal ways to listen, share resources, and work together to solve significant problems. The selfless acts of collegiality and community we've observed are, frankly, awe-inspiring. Never before have we been prouder to call ourselves members of NACAC, and we're confident that our collective membership, and the people we serve, will emerge stronger than ever. Now is the time. **We are ready.** ▪