



Statement of Principles of Good Practice

For members of the National Association for College Admission Counseling

Revised September 2001; Revisions effective for the enrollment cycle of the 2003/2004 academic year.

Ethics in recruiting students and awarding scholarships provided the impetus for creating NACAC in 1937. As a reflection of that major purpose, one of the first actions taken by the founders was the creation of a Code of Ethics. After many years of reviewing, updating, and rewriting, this Code is today's Statement of Principles of Good Practice.

While the Code originally applied only to NACAC members, the importance of ethical practices in the admission process for all institutions was recognized by those in the profession. As a result, a joint statement utilizing the basic philosophy of NACAC's Code of Ethics was developed in tandem with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers and The College Board, and was endorsed by the American Council on Education, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Student Association, and the American School Counselor Association.

The Statement of Principles of Good Practice is reviewed annually and revised to reflect new concerns for ethical admission practices and policies.

High schools, colleges, universities, other institutions and organizations, and individuals dedicated to the promotion of formal education believe in the dignity, the worth, and the potentialities of every human being. They cooperate in the development of programs and services in postsecondary counseling, admission, and financial aid to eliminate bias related to ethnicity, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, national origin, and disabling conditions. Believing that institutions of learning are only as strong ultimately as their human resources, they look upon counseling individual students about their educational plans as a fundamental aspect of their responsibilities.

They support, therefore, the following Statement of Principles of Good Practice for members of the National Association for College Admission Counseling:

I. ADMISSION PROMOTION AND RECRUITMENT

A. College and University Members agree that they

1. will ensure that admission counselors are viewed as professional members of their institutions' staffs. As professionals, their compensation shall take the form of a fixed salary rather than commissions or bonuses based on the number of students recruited.
2. will be responsible for the development of publications, written communications, and presentations, i.e., college nights, college days, and college fairs, used for their institution's promotional and recruitment activity. They
 - a) will state clearly and precisely the requirements for secondary school preparation, admission tests, and transfer student admission.
 - b) will include a current and accurate admission calendar. If the institution offers special admission options such as early admission, early action, early decision, or waiting list, the publication should define these programs and state deadline dates, notification dates, required deposits, refund policies, and the date when the candidates must reply. If students are placed on wait lists or alternate lists, the letter which notifies the students of the placement should provide a history that describes the number of students placed on the wait lists, the number offered admission, and the availability of financial aid and housing. Finally, if summer admission or mid-year admission is available, students should be made aware of the possibility in official communication from the institutions.
 - c) will not falsely advertise or misrepresent their academic offerings. Rather, members will provide precise information about their academic majors and degree programs. Such information should include a factual and accurate description of majors, minors, concentrations and/or interdisciplinary offerings that apply toward the completion of the undergraduate degree.
 - d) will provide students, families and secondary schools with the most comprehensive information about costs of attendance and opportunities and requirements for all types of financial aid, and state the specific relationship between admission practices and policies and financial aid practices and policies.
 - e) will describe in detail any special programs, including overseas study, credit by examination, or advanced placement.

- f) will include pictures and descriptions of the campus and community which are current and realistic.
 - g) will provide accurate information about the opportunities/selection for institutional housing, deadline dates for housing deposits, housing deposit refunds, and describe policies for renewal availability of such institutional housing.
 - h) will provide accurate and specific descriptions of any special programs or support services available to students with handicapping conditions, learning disabilities, and/or other special needs.
 - i) will identify the source and year of study when institutional publications and/or media communications cite published ratings of academic programs, academic rigor or reputations, or athletic rankings.
 - j) should indicate that the institution is a NACAC member and has endorsed the principles contained in this Statement.
3. will exercise appropriate responsibility for all people whom the institution involves in admission, promotional, and recruitment activities (including their alumni, coaches, students, faculty, and other institutional representatives), and educate them about the principles outlined in this Statement. Colleges and universities which engage the services of admission management or consulting firms shall be responsible for assuring that such firms adhere to this Statement.
 4. will speak forthrightly, accurately, and comprehensively in presenting their institutions to counseling personnel, prospective students, and their families. They
 - a) will state clearly the admission requirements of their institutions, and inform students and counselors about changed admission requirements so that candidates will not be adversely affected in the admission process.
 - b) will state clearly all deadlines for application, notification, housing, and candidates' reply requirements for both admission and financial aid.
- c) will furnish data describing the currently enrolled freshman class and will describe in published profiles all members of the enrolling freshman class. Subgroups within the profile may be presented separately because of their unique character or special circumstances.
 - d) will not use disparaging comparisons of secondary or postsecondary institutions.
 - e) will provide accurate information about the use/role of standardized testing in their institutions' admission process.
5. will not use unprofessional promotional tactics by admission counselors and other institutional representatives. They
 - a) will not contract with secondary school personnel for remuneration for referred students.
 - b) will not offer or pay a per capita premium to any individual or agency for the recruitment or enrollment of students, international as well as domestic.
 - c) will not encourage students to transfer if they have shown no interest in doing so.
 - d) will not compromise the goals and principles of this Statement.
 6. will refrain from recruiting students who are enrolled, registered, or have declared their intent or submitted contractual deposit with other institutions unless the students initiate inquiries themselves or unless cooperation is sought from institutions which provide transfer programs.
 7. will understand the nature and intent of all admission referral services utilized by their institutions (including their alumni, coaches, students, faculty, and other institutional representatives) and seek to ensure the validity and professional competency of such services.

B. Secondary School Members agree that they

1. will provide a program of counseling which introduces a broad range of postsecondary opportunities to students.

2. will encourage students and their families to take the initiative in learning about colleges and universities.
3. will not use disparaging comparisons of secondary or postsecondary institutions.
4. will establish a policy with respect to secondary school representatives for the release of students' names. Any policy which authorizes the release of students' names should provide that the release be made only with the students' permission consistent with applicable laws and regulations. That permission may be a general consent to any release of the students' names. Secondary school representatives shall, in releasing students' names, be sensitive to the students' academic, athletic, or other abilities.
5. will refuse any reward or remuneration from a college, university, or private counseling service for placement of their school's students.
6. will be responsible for all personnel who may become involved in counseling students on post-secondary options available and educate them about the principles in this Statement.
7. will be responsible for compliance with applicable laws and regulations with respect to the students' rights to privacy.
8. will not guarantee specific college placement.
9. should provide information about opportunities and requirements for financial aid.
10. should indicate that the institution is a NACAC member and has endorsed the principles in this Statement.

C. Independent Counselor Members agree that they

1. will provide a program of counseling which introduces a broad range of postsecondary opportunities to students.
2. will encourage students and their families to take initiative in learning about colleges and universities.
3. will not use disparaging comparisons of secondary or postsecondary institutions.

4. will refuse unethical or unprofessional requests (e.g., for names of top students, names of athletes) from college or university representatives (e.g., alumni, coaches, or other agencies or organizations).
5. will refuse any reward or remuneration from a college, university, agency, or organization for placement of their clients.
6. will be responsible for all personnel who may become involved in counseling students on post-secondary options and educate them about the principles in this Statement.
7. will be responsible for compliance with applicable laws and regulations with respect to the students' rights to privacy.
8. will not guarantee specific college placement.
9. will provide advertisements or promotional materials which are truthful and do not include any false, misleading, or exaggerated claims with respect to services offered.
10. will communicate with the secondary school counselor about the college admission process, after obtaining student and parental consent.
11. should provide information about opportunities and requirements for financial aid.
12. should consider donating time to students who need the services of an independent counselor but who are unable to pay.
13. should indicate that the NACAC member has endorsed the principles in this Statement.

D. All other members providing college admission counseling services to students agree to adhere to the principles in this Statement.

E. College fairs, clearinghouses, and matching services that provide liaison between colleges and universities and students shall be considered a positive part of the admission process if they effectively supplement other secondary school guidance activities and adhere to this Statement.

II. ADMISSION PROCEDURES

A. College and University Members agree that they

1. will accept full responsibility for admission decisions and for proper notification of those decisions to candidates and, when possible, to their secondary schools.
2. will receive information about candidates in confidence, consistent with applicable laws and regulations, and will respect completely the confidential nature of such data.
3. will not apply newly-revised requirements to the disadvantage of a candidate whose secondary school courses were established in accordance with earlier requirements.
4. will not require candidates or the secondary schools to indicate the order of the candidates' college or university preferences, except under early decision plans.
5. will not make offers of admission to students who have not submitted admission applications.
6. will permit first-year candidates for fall admission to choose, without penalty, among offers of admission and financial aid until May 1. It is understood that May 1 will be viewed as the postmark date. Colleges that solicit commitments to offers of admission and/or financial assistance prior to May 1 may do so provided those offers include a clear statement that written requests for extensions until May 1 will be granted, and that such requests will not jeopardize a student's status for admission or financial aid. Candidates admitted under an early decision program are a recognized exception to this provision.
7. will work with their institution's administration to ensure that financial aid and scholarship offers and housing options are not used to manipulate commitments prior to May 1.
8. will, if necessary, establish a wait list that:
 - a) is of reasonable length.
 - b) is maintained for the shortest possible period and in no case later than August 1.
9. will establish wait list procedures that ensure that no student on any wait list is asked for a deposit in order to remain on the wait list or for a commitment to enroll prior to receiving an official written offer of admission.
10. will state clearly the admission procedures for transfer students by informing candidates of deadlines, documents required, courses accepted, and course equivalency and other relevant policies.
11. will inform students and counselors about new or changed requirements which may adversely affect candidates who have met all required deadlines, deposits, and commitments according to the students' original notification from the institution.
12. will accept, for the purposes of documenting student academic records, only official transcripts in the admission or registration process which come directly from the counseling, guidance, or registrar's offices of the institution(s) the candidate attends or has attended or from other appropriate agencies.
13. will, in the development and administration of their application policies and procedures, abide by the NACAC Definitions of Admission Decision Options.
14. will not discriminate in the admission selection process against applicants based on the particular application form that an applicant uses, provided that the college or university has agreed explicitly, as in common application membership, or implicitly, as in online or other computer-based technology, to accept the particular version of the application.
15. should admit candidates on the basis of academic and personal criteria rather than financial need. This provision shall not apply to international students ineligible for federal student assistance.
16. should notify high school personnel when the institution's admission selection committee includes students.
17. should notify candidates as soon as possible if they are clearly inadmissible.

18. should make every effort to provide candidates for financial aid with financial aid decisions as soon as possible following an offer of admission.

B. Secondary School Members agree that they

1. will provide, in a timely manner, for colleges and universities accurate, legible, and complete official transcripts for the school's candidates.
2. will provide colleges and universities with a description of the school's marking system which may include the rank in class and/or grade point average.
3. will in their profiles and other publications provide true and accurate information with regard to test scores for all students in the represented class cohort group who participated in college admission testing.
4. will provide accurate descriptions of the candidates' personal qualities which are relevant to the admission process.
5. will urge candidates to understand and discharge their responsibilities in the admission process. Candidates will be instructed to
 - a) comply with requests for additional information in a timely manner.
 - b) respond to institutional deadlines and refrain from stockpiling acceptances.
 - c) refrain from submitting multiple deposits or commitments, as this may jeopardize their acceptances to those institutions.
 - d) refrain from submitting more than one application under any early decision plan and, if admitted under such a plan, comply with all institutional guidelines including those regarding the obligations to: enroll, withdraw all other applications, and refrain from submitting subsequent applications.
 - e) respond to institutional deadlines on housing reservations, financial aid, health records, and course prescheduling, where all or any of these are applicable.

6. will not reveal, unless authorized, candidates' college or university preferences.
7. will sign only one pending early decision agreement for any student.
8. will counsel students and their families to notify other institutions when they have accepted an admission offer.
9. will encourage students to be the sole authors of their applications and essays and will counsel against inappropriate assistance on the part of others.
10. should report any significant change in candidates' academic status or qualifications, including personal conduct record, between the time of recommendation and graduation, where permitted by applicable laws and regulations and if requested by an institution's application.
11. should provide a school profile which clearly describes special curricular opportunities (e.g., honors, Advanced Placement courses, seminars) and a comprehensive listing of all courses with an explanation of unusual abbreviations and any information required for proper understanding.
12. should advise students and their families not to sign any contractual agreement with an institution without examining the provisions of the contract.
13. should counsel students and their families to file a reasonable number of applications.

C. Independent Counselor Members agree that they

1. will urge candidates to recognize and discharge their responsibilities in the admission process. Candidates will be instructed to
 - a) comply with requests for additional information in a timely manner.
 - b) respond to institutional deadlines and refrain from stockpiling acceptances.
 - c) refrain from submitting multiple deposits or making multiple commitments.

- d) refrain from submitting more than one application under any early decision plan and, if admitted under such a plan, comply with all institutional guidelines including those regarding the obligations to: enroll, withdraw all other applications, and refrain from submitting subsequent applications.
 - e) respond to institutional deadlines on housing reservations, financial aid, health records, and course prescheduling, where all or any of these are applicable.
2. will not reveal, unless authorized, candidates' college or university preferences.
 3. will follow the process recommended by the candidates' high school for filing college applications.
 4. will encourage students to be the sole authors of their applications and essays, and counsel against inappropriate assistance on the part of others.
 5. should advise students and their families not to sign any contractual agreement with an institution without examining the provisions of the contract.
 6. should counsel students and their families to file a reasonable number of applications.

D. All other members providing college admission counseling services to students agree to adhere to the principles in this Statement.

III. STANDARDIZED COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING

Members accept the principle that fairness in testing practices should govern all institutional policies. Because test results can never be a precise measurement of human potential, members commit themselves to practices that eliminate bias of any kind, provide equal access, and consider tests as only one measure in admission/counseling practices.

A. College and University Members agree that they

1. will use test scores and related data discretely and for purposes that are appropriate and validated.

2. will provide prospective students with accurate and complete information about the use of test scores in the admission process.
3. will refrain from using minimum test scores as the sole criterion for admission, thereby denying certain students because of small differences in scores.
4. will use test scores in conjunction with other data such as school record, recommendations, and other relevant information in making decisions.
5. will educate staff in understanding the concepts of test measurement, test interpretation, and test use so they may make informed admission decisions from the test data.
6. will maintain the confidentiality of test scores.
7. will publicize clearly policies relating to placement by tests, awarding of credit, and other policies based on test results.
8. will, in the reporting of test scores, report first on all first-year admitted or enrolled students, or both, including special subgroups (e.g., athletes, nonnative speakers) and then, if they wish, may present separately the score characteristics of special subgroup populations. Universities with more than one undergraduate division may report first by division and then by special subgroups within divisions. Clear explanations of who is included in the subgroup population should be made. Those institutions that do not require tests or for which tests are optional will only report scores if the institution clearly and emphatically states the limits of the group being reported.
9. should conduct institutional research to inquire into the most appropriate use of tests for admission decisions.
10. should counsel students to take only a reasonable number of tests and only those necessary for their postsecondary plans.
11. should refrain from the public reporting of mean and median admission test scores and instead, depending upon the requested information, report scores by any or all of the following methods

- a) middle 50 percent of the scores of all first-year applicants.
- b) middle 50 percent of the scores of all first-year students admitted.
- c) middle 50 percent of the scores of all first-year students enrolled.
- d) appropriate score bands for all first-year students applied, admitted, and enrolled.

B. Secondary School Members agree that they

- 1. will release and report test scores only with students' consent.
- 2. will avoid comparing colleges and universities solely on the basis of test scores.
- 3. will work with other school officials and other groups to keep test results confidential and in perspective.
- 4. will, in the reporting of test scores, report on all students within a discrete class (e.g., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) who participated in college admission testing.
- 5. should avoid undue emphasis on test scores as a measure of students' potential and ability when representing students to colleges and universities.
- 6. should inform students about what tests they need for admission, where they may take them, and how to interpret the results in their own contexts.
- 7. should be knowledgeable about the limitations of standardized tests and counsel students with these limitations in mind.
- 8. should inform students about the use and validity of test scores, both for admission and as measures of potential and ability.
- 9. should counsel students and families on how test scores may be used in the admission process by colleges and universities.
- 10. should counsel students to take only a reasonable number of those tests necessary for their post-

secondary plans, without regard to the impact the test results may have on the school profile report.

- 11. should counsel students and families about data, other than test results, that may be submitted as part of the application process.
- 12. should counsel students about test preparation programs and inform them about alternative programs and/or approaches.
- 13. should refrain from the public reporting of mean and median admission test scores and instead, report scores by either or both of the following:
 - a) middle 50 percent of all students tested by discrete grade level.
 - b) appropriate score bands of all students tested by discrete grade level.

C. Independent Counselor Members agree that they

- 1. will release and report test scores only with students' consent.
- 2. will avoid comparing colleges and universities solely on the basis of test scores.
- 3. will avoid undue emphasis on test scores as a measure of students' potential and ability when representing students to colleges and universities.
- 4. will work with other school officials and other groups to keep test results confidential and in perspective.
- 5. should inform students about what tests they need for admission, where they may take them, and how to interpret the results in their own contexts.
- 6. should be knowledgeable about the limitations of standardized tests and counsel students with these limitations in mind.
- 7. should inform students about the use and validity of test scores, both for admission and as measures of potential and ability.

8. should counsel students and families on how test scores may be used in the admission process by colleges and universities.
9. should counsel students to take only a reasonable number of tests and only those necessary for their postsecondary plans.
10. should counsel students and families about data, other than test results, that may be submitted as part of the application process.
11. should counsel students about test preparation programs and inform them about alternative programs and/or approaches.

D. All other members providing college admission counseling and/or testing services to students agree to adhere to the principles in this Statement.

IV. FINANCIAL AID

This section was revised through a collaborative effort among representatives from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), National Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), the College Scholarship Service (CSS) and NACAC. Member institutions of NACAC are encouraged to support the principle of distributing financial aid funds on the basis of proven financial need. Financial need is defined as the difference between a student's total annual educational expenses and the amount the student and his or her family is expected to pay. In other words, the equation for determining financial need is "cost of attendance" minus the "expected family contribution" equals "financial need." Members agree that financial aid should be offered to candidates in the forms of grants, scholarships, loans, or employment, either alone or in combination. Members agree that financial aid should be viewed as supplementary to the efforts of students' families when students are not self-supporting.

A. College and University Members agree that they

1. will, to the extent possible, through their publications and communications, provide students, families, and schools with the most current, clear, factual and comprehensive information about their institutions' total costs of attendance (both direct and indirect), when referencing institutions' financial aid opportunities and practices, including practices for international students.

2. will utilize a consistent and equitable needs analysis methodology in determining the expected financial contribution of candidates' families and in making the expected estimates or awards of the amount of financial aid which may be available to them after documentation.
3. will notify accepted aid applicants of institutional financial aid decisions before the date by which a reply must be made to the offer of admission, assuming all requested application forms are in on time.
4. will state clearly policies on renewal of financial aid which will typically include a review of their current financial circumstances.
5. will permit first-year candidates for fall admission to choose, without penalty, among offers of financial aid until May 1. Colleges that solicit commitments to offers of need-based and/or merit-based financial aid prior to May 1 may do so provided those offers include a clear statement that written requests for extensions until May 1 will be granted, and that such requests will not jeopardize a student's status for financial aid. Candidates admitted under an early decision program are a recognized exception to this provision.
6. will not publicly announce the amount of need-based aid awarded to individuals; however, amounts of no-need scholarship awards to individuals may be a matter of public record.
7. will not knowingly offer financial aid-packages to students who have committed to attend other institutions unless the students initiate such inquiries.
8. will not award grants, including scholarships, or final financial aid packages to students who have not submitted admission applications. Institutions may provide estimated aid packages and information regarding scholarship programs prior to the time an application is filed. Athletic scholarships, which adhere to nationally established signing periods, are a recognized exception to this provision and are viewed in the same light as an early decision agreement.
9. should refrain from using financial need as a consideration in selecting students. This provision shall not apply to international students who

are ineligible for United States federal student assistance.

10. should, to the extent possible, within the institutions' capabilities, meet the full need of accepted students.

B. Secondary School Members agree that they

1. will refrain, in public announcements, from giving the amounts of financial aid received by individual students; however, amounts of no-need scholarship awards may be a matter of public record.
2. will not make guarantees of any financial aid or scholarship awards.
3. should not encourage students to apply to particular colleges and universities to enhance their high schools' statistical records regarding the number or amount of scholarship awards received.
4. should advise students who have been awarded financial aid by non-collegiate sources that they have the responsibility to notify the college of the type and amount of such outside aid.

C. Independent Counselor Members agree that they

1. will refrain, in public announcements, from giving the amounts of financial aid received by individual students; however, amounts of no-need scholarship awards may be a matter of public record.
2. will not make guarantees of any financial aid or scholarship awards.
3. should advise students who have been awarded financial aid by non-collegiate sources that they have the responsibility to notify the college of the type and amount of such outside aid.

D. All other members providing college admission and financial counseling services to students agree to adhere to the principles in this Statement.

V. ADVANCED STANDING STUDENTS AND THE AWARDING OF CREDIT

A. College and University Members agree that they

1. will design placement, credit, and exemption policies to augment educational placement opportunities, not to recruit students.
2. will evaluate student competency through the use of validated methods and techniques.
3. will define and publish in the institutions' preadmission information the policies and procedures for granting credit.
4. will evaluate previously earned credit, published by the admitting college or university, in a manner which ensures the integrity of academic standards as well as the principle of fairness to the students.

B. Secondary School Members agree that they

1. will alert students to the full implications of college and university placement, credit, and exemption policies with regard to their educational planning and goals.
2. will make students aware of the importance of accreditation.
3. will make students aware of the possibilities of earning credit through both nontraditional educational experiences and examinations and alternative methods of instruction.

C. Independent Counselor Members agree that they

1. will alert students to the full implications of college and university placement, credit, and exemption policies with regard to their educational planning and goals.
2. will make students aware of the importance of accreditation.
3. will make students aware of the possibilities of earning credit through both nontraditional educational experiences and examinations and alternative methods of instruction.

D. All other members providing admission counseling services to students agree to adhere to the principles in this Statement.



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