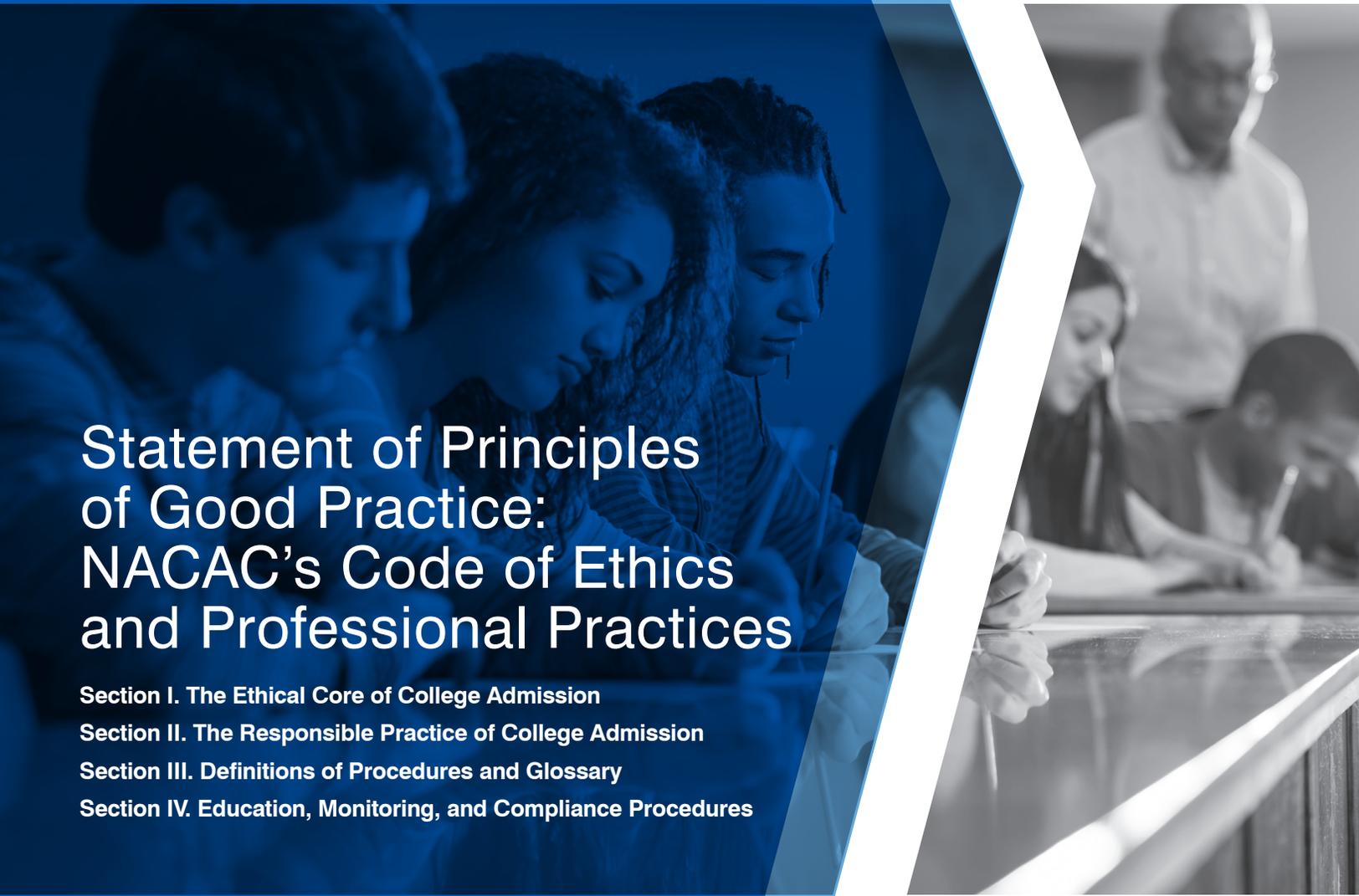




National Association for
College Admission Counseling

**Approved by the
2017 Assembly**

The background of the cover features a photograph of students in a classroom. The image is split into two color schemes: the left side is a blue-tinted photograph of three students looking down at their work, and the right side is a grayscale photograph of a teacher standing and interacting with students at a desk. A large white arrow graphic points from the top right towards the center of the page.

Statement of Principles of Good Practice: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices

Section I. The Ethical Core of College Admission

Section II. The Responsible Practice of College Admission

Section III. Definitions of Procedures and Glossary

Section IV. Education, Monitoring, and Compliance Procedures

Introduction

This document reflects NACAC’s long-standing commitment to principled conduct among professionals who support students in the college transition process from secondary school to postsecondary education and with the transfer process between postsecondary institutions.

All NACAC members agree to abide by the *Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP): NACAC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*. Since membership in NACAC and its state and regional affiliates is institutional, organizational, and individual, members must adhere to the *Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* and take responsibility for their institution’s actions, including the actions of departments and offices that are not under the member’s purview, as well as agents, consulting firms, vendors, and others who act on behalf of their institution.

Even with our best efforts, this document cannot anticipate every new admission or recruitment process or strategy that may be enacted. We hope, however, that professionals will always honor the spirit and intent of this document. As the college admission landscape continues to change, adjustments to the language, procedures, or behaviors advanced in this document will be considered.

The *SPGP: NACAC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* is divided into four sections:

- Sections I and II articulate the ethics and practice of our profession.
- Section III is a glossary that focuses on definitions and stipulations that are important for understanding this document. We urge readers to pay particular attention to the definitions for colleges, candidates for admission, counselors, deadlines and time zones, laws and regulations, deposits, secondary schools, student-athletes, and transfer students.
- Section IV outlines NACAC’s Education, Monitoring, and Compliance procedures. It shows readers how to file a complaint and how NACAC follows up on complaints. It also specifies the consequences of noncompliance.

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Preamble

Postsecondary education has the power to transform an individual's life by providing a path to personal fulfillment, a meaningful career, and the realization of dreams. Its power can lead our society to a future that includes engaged citizens and a more prosperous 21st century.

College admission and counseling professionals help students make thoughtful choices about their futures. Our work is guided by principles of honesty, integrity, transparency, equity, fairness, and respect for students and fellow professionals. These values guide us in our service to students and families, our institutions, society, and each other.

Promoting ethical admission practices has been the cornerstone of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) since our founding in 1937. The Statement of Principles of Good Practice, which with publication of this document, is renamed *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*, protects the interests of both students and institutions by upholding a college admission process free from coercion and discrimination. The *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* serves as the basis of our profession and an affirmation of what we stand for.

Our profession strives to ensure that the students we serve and all of our colleagues are valued and supported. We thrive by embracing and engaging our unique identities, experiences, and perspectives, and we are committed to increasing the enrollment and success of historically underrepresented populations. We are dedicated to promoting college access and addressing systemic inequities to ensure that college campuses reflect our society's many cultures, stimulate the exchange of ideas, value differences, and prepare our students to become global citizens and leaders.

The *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* is the conscience of our profession. It guides our actions in the face of current and emerging pressures. It empowers us to build trust and find common ground while we work to ensure that every student's dignity, worth, and potential are realized in the transition to postsecondary education.

Core Values

Education

We believe in and are committed to educating students, their families, the public, fellow education professionals, and ourselves about the transition to and within postsecondary education.

Fairness and Equity

We believe our members have a responsibility to treat one another and students in a fundamentally fair and equitable manner. Our institutional and individual members strive to eliminate from the education system bias based on race, ethnicity, creed, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, political affiliation, national origin, or disability. We view this as fundamental to our responsibility as educators.

Professionalism

We believe that ethical behavior is the foundation of the counseling, admission, and enrollment management profession. We are responsible for the integrity of our actions and, insofar as we can affect them, the actions of our member institutions, organizations, and individuals.

Civility

We believe members should conduct dialogue with respect and openness to differences, listening to various perspectives from a place of support and understanding. Members should strive to disagree without being disrespectful, abusive, or demeaning.

Collaboration

We believe the effectiveness of our profession—college counseling, admission, and enrollment management—is enhanced when we work together to advocate for students and their best interests.

Trust

We believe our profession is based upon trust, mutual respect, and honesty with one another and with students.

Social Responsibility

We believe we have a duty to serve students responsibly by safeguarding their rights and their access to and within postsecondary education.

Section I. The Ethical Core of College Admission

A. Truthfulness and Transparency: Guiding Principles and Rationale

Counseling professionals must provide their students and colleges with complete, truthful, and factual information that will allow them to make informed decisions.

Colleges are equally obligated to provide complete, factual, and readily accessible information that will allow students and their counselors to make informed college comparisons and choices.

Implementation:

1. All members agree:
 - a. they will accurately describe, represent, and promote their schools, institutions, organizations, and services to students and to colleagues and will not misrepresent themselves or their institutions. This includes the data that appear on profiles, websites, and promotional materials and data that are reported to the government, private agencies, and the media
 - b. when they share information about students, it will be relevant to the college admission process and will be accurate, up-to-date, complete, and free from misrepresentations of fact or material omissions
 - c. when they publish translations, those translations will fully and accurately reflect the meaning of the text in the original language
 - d. they will comply with all local, state, provincial, and federal laws and lawful regulations.
2. Colleges must make publicly available accurate, complete, and current information concerning:
 - a. deadlines for applying for admission, scholarships, financial aid, and housing
 - b. the factors considered in making admission, financial aid, and scholarship decisions, including, but not limited to, students' demonstrated interest, social media presence, personal conduct, legacy status, and financial need
 - c. academic majors and other academic offerings and programs, such as honors programs, off-campus study, conditional admission, and post-graduation outcomes
 - d. the availability and selection process for institutional housing, deadline dates for housing deposits, housing deposit refunds, and policies for renewal of institutional housing
 - e. costs and the availability of scholarships and financial aid. In accordance with the Code of Conduct of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), institutional award notifications and/or other institutionally provided materials will use NASFAA's standard terminology and include the following:
 - a clear identification of the individual components of the institution's cost of attendance that distinguishes direct costs (potential billable charges) from indirect costs (such as books and supplies)
 - a clear identification of each component of a financial aid award to indicate whether it is gift aid (such as a grant or scholarship), a loan that the student must repay, a loan that another party must repay, or employment (such as Federal Work-Study)
 - the renewal requirements for each award.
3. Secondary schools will provide accurate, legible, and complete transcripts and other school documents for all candidates for admission or scholarships. Secondary schools must:
 - a. ensure that the data reported on school profiles and other documents are accurate and current, and must be transparent about when the data were gathered and the groups that are included or excluded from the data
 - b. describe on their school's transcripts or school profiles their grading scale or any other method of representing student progress, their grade distribution, their policies on weighting courses and on repeating courses, and whether grades from all courses attempted are reported on transcripts and included in any cumulative GPA calculation. Schools must also disclose their policy for reporting disciplinary infractions. Regardless of such policies, they must disclose to colleges any change in a student's enrollment status whether pre- or post-admission.

B. Professional Conduct: Guiding Principles and Rationale

Advocating for the best interests of students in the admission process is the primary ethical concern of our profession. This requires that students receive college admission counseling that they can trust.

Members will therefore adhere to high standards of individual and institutional professional conduct. Conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived, and unprofessional conduct undermine that trust.

Similarly, secondary schools, colleges, individuals, and NACAC member organizations and agencies should work together in an environment that fosters that trust. Public discourse that is based on false or incomplete information, hearsay, or malice is detrimental to that environment and to the fair and ethical practices necessary for the equitable recruitment of students.

Implementation:

1. To provide college counseling in the best interest of students, members will:
 - a. provide guidance and information to help students determine their best academic, personal, and financial college match
 - b. inform students and families of their ethical responsibilities in the admission process, including counseling students that it is unethical to:
 - submit false, plagiarized, or fraudulent statements on applications or other documents
 - have more than one pending Early Decision application
 - maintain an active enrollment deposit or the equivalent at more than one US college. (It is understood that students admitted conditionally to colleges outside the US may have no more than one active deposit per country.)
 - c. inform students that they should notify colleges once they have decided to decline their offers of admission.
2. To avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of unethical behavior, members will:
 - a. not be compensated by commissions, bonuses, or other incentive payments based on the number of students referred, recruited, admitted, or enrolled. The use of commissioned agents to recruit students who are neither US citizens nor US permanent residents is a recognized exception (See Section II.E., The Use of Commissioned Agents in International Student Recruitment)
 - b. not offer or accept any reward or remuneration to influence an admission, housing, scholarship, financial aid, or enrollment decision
 - c. ensure that representatives, including individuals, vendors, consultants, agents, or agencies, will adhere to the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* while acting on the institution's behalf.
3. To maintain a culture of professional civility and respect, members will not:
 - a. disseminate inaccurate or misleading information about other secondary schools, colleges, organizations, or individual professionals
 - b. engage in clearly recognizable offensive behavior or other egregious personal conduct that is contrary to the best interests and purposes of NACAC.

Section I. The Ethical Core of College Admission

C. Respect for Confidentiality: Guiding Principles and Rationale

The college admission and counseling community depends on trust. An important component in building that trust is a respect for confidentiality.

Implementation:

1. Members will send and receive information about candidates in confidence and will protect the confidentiality of all information that is shared.
2. Secondary school members will not divulge to colleges an individual student's college application, admission, enrollment, or financial aid and scholarship offers during the admission process without express permission from the student. Nor will college members disclose such information to other colleges without express permission from the student. It is understood, however, that if a candidate has been admitted Early Decision, then the college may notify the candidate's high school and other colleges of the candidate's application status.
3. College members will not ask candidates, their counselors, their schools, or others to divulge or rank order their college preferences on applications or other documents. They may ask the question verbally only if the answer will not be used to influence an admission, scholarship, or financial aid decision.
4. Colleges may, however, require documentation that might divulge the name of another institution when it supports a candidate's appeal of an admission, financial aid, or scholarship decision. This is only permissible when the appeal has been initiated by the candidate and when the appeal references an offer from another institution.

A. Application Plans for First-Time Undergraduates in the United States: Guiding Principles and Rationale

The application plans known as Early Action, Early Decision, Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action, Regular Decision, and Rolling Admission are widely used throughout the United States by students and counselors. By agreeing to use only these application plans, colleges provide clarity and consistency to a process that would otherwise be complex and confusing. Colleges may use various application forms or types, but they must adhere to the application plans outlined below.

Implementation

Colleges in the United States agree they will use only the plans defined below and will abide by the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*' definitions and stipulations. They will not identify these plans by other names, nor will they use these plan names to refer to other aspects of the college admission process.

1. Standard application plans

Regular Decision: Students submit their applications by a specified deadline and are notified of a decision within a clearly stated period of time.

Rolling Admission: Students apply at any time after a college begins accepting applications until a final closing date, which may be as late as the start of the term for which they are applying. Students are notified of a decision as their applications are completed and are reviewed.

- a. Students who apply under the two standard application plans will not be required to accept the college's offer of admission prior to May 1.
- b. Colleges must 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. In these cases, they must establish a priority deadline that assures students of full consideration, and that deadline must not be earlier than October 15.

2. Early application plan

Early Action (EA): Students apply by an earlier deadline to receive a decision in advance of the college's Regular Decision notification date. Students will not be asked to accept the college's offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1.

3. Restrictive early application plans

a. **Early Decision (ED):** Students commit to a first-choice college and, if admitted, agree to enroll and withdraw their other college applications. Colleges may offer ED I or II with different deadlines. This is the only application plan where students are required to accept a college's offer of admission and submit a deposit prior to May 1.

- i. Because it is a binding commitment, Early Decision can never be the only application option for admission. Regular Decision or Rolling Admission must always be an option as well, though colleges must alert students if space may be limited for students who choose those options. Colleges may adopt an Early Decision option that applies only to certain majors or programs (such as high-demand majors that have strict enrollment limits).
- ii. Colleges must notify candidates of the decision within a clearly stated period of time. A nonrefundable deposit may be required before May 1.

- iii. Colleges will respond to an application for financial aid at or near the time of an offer of admission and before a deposit is required. Should a student who applies for financial aid not be offered an award that makes attendance possible, the student may request a release from the Early Decision commitment.
- iv. If a candidate is denied or deferred, an Early Decision application ceases to be binding.
- v. While pursuing admission under an Early Decision plan, students may apply to other institutions under a Standard or Early Action Application plan, but may have only one Early Decision application pending at any time.
- vi. Colleges must not offer incentives exclusive to students applying or admitted under an Early Decision application plan. Examples of incentives include the promise of special housing, enhanced financial aid packages, and special scholarships for Early Decision admits. Colleges may, however, disclose how admission rates for Early Decision differ from those for other admission plans.
- vii. Colleges that have admission preferences for specific applicant populations, such as legacies (typically siblings or the offspring of alumni/ae) or recruited athletes, must state if those preferences are available only to Early Decision candidates.

b. Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action (REA):

Students apply to a college of preference and receive a decision in advance of its Regular Decision notification date. Colleges place certain restrictions on applying under other early application plans. Students admitted under Restrictive Early Action are not obligated to accept the college's offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1.

- i. Colleges with Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action must not restrict students from applying under other colleges' Regular or Rolling application plans.
- ii. Colleges must clearly articulate their restrictions in their Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action policies and agreements with students.
- iii. Colleges must not offer incentives for applying under a Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action plan.
- iv. If a candidate is denied or deferred admission, a Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action application ceases to be restrictive.

Section II. The Responsible Practice of College Admission

B. Admission Cycle Dates, Deadlines, and Procedures for First-Time Fall Entry Undergraduates: Guiding Principles and Rationale

College choices should be informed, well-considered, and free from coercion. Students require a reasonable amount of time to identify their college choices, to complete applications for admission, financial aid, and scholarships, and to decide which offer of admission to accept. Once students have committed themselves to a college, other colleges must respect that choice and cease recruiting them.

Similarly, colleges need protection when other institutions pressure students to submit applications or enrollment deposits before established deadlines or when they continue to solicit applications or enrollments after students have finalized their college decisions.

Implementation in the United States

Colleges in the United States agree they will adhere to the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*' established dates and deadlines, as specified below, for the fall college admission cycle. They also agree not to establish policies or engage in practices whose effect is to circumvent these dates and deadlines. It is understood that programs where students are dually enrolled in both high school and college are a recognized exception to these deadlines.

While the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* provides deadlines for the fall admission of first-time undergraduates, it is silent regarding applications for terms other than fall because the differences in academic calendars make this impractical. However, colleges are still obligated to state their deadlines for applications, financial aid, enrollment deposits, and housing on websites and publications.

1. Agreed upon dates and deadlines
 - a. October 15: This date is the earliest deadline colleges may require first-year candidates to submit an application for fall admission. Members must give equal consideration to all applications received by that date.
 - b. Notification of admission: Members must not notify first-year candidates of their fall admission before the official completion of their junior year of secondary school or its equivalent.
 - c. Notification of financial aid: Colleges must notify accepted aid applicants of financial aid decisions at least two weeks before the institutional enrollment confirmation deadline, so long as the candidates have submitted all requested application forms and supporting materials by the designated priority deadline. Notification requirements for wait list procedures are a recognized exception.
 - d. May 1—National Candidates Reply Date: Colleges must permit first-year candidates for fall admission to choose among offers of admission and institutional financial aid and scholarships until May 1. Binding Early Decision plans and recipients of athletic scholarships are recognized exceptions.
 - e. August 1—Waitlisted candidates: This is the final date for notifying all candidates waitlisted for fall admission of the results of the wait list.
2. Colleges must not establish policies, engage in practices, imply advantage, or offer incentives whose effect is to circumvent the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*' established deadlines. Incentives are allowed when equally available to students who wait until the established deadlines. Colleges will not guarantee admission, specific college placement, or institutional financial aid or scholarship awards prior to an application being submitted, except when preexisting criteria are stated in official publications.
3. The May 1 National Candidates Reply Date
 - a. Colleges must state the May 1 deadline explicitly in their offers of admission and clearly indicate whether deposits submitted prior to May 1 are refundable or non-refundable. Making a deposit refundable, however, still obligates a college to abide by the May 1 National Candidates Reply Date.
 - b. Colleges will honor their admission, scholarship, and financial aid commitments to students and will not adversely alter their offers prior to May 1 for candidates who choose not to reply until that date. Nor will they state or imply that candidates might incur such a penalty by waiting until May 1 to submit an enrollment deposit.
 - c. The May 1 deadline also applies to any academic major, institutional scholarship, or special program to which the candidate has been offered admission. Examples of special programs may include honors programs and dual-enrollment graduate or professional degree programs.
 - d. The May 1 deadline also applies to summer session enrollments if the student is a fall applicant who is required to enroll in summer classes as a condition of fall enrollment.
4. Housing assignments and May 1

Colleges must not use on-campus housing assignments to manipulate enrollment commitments prior to May 1. The only exception occurs when colleges are unable to house all their first-year students. In that case, they may assign housing on a first-come, first-served basis and alert candidates that on-campus housing is not guaranteed if they wait until May 1 to submit their housing deposits. In such situations, colleges must refund their enrollment and housing deposits if students cancel their admission by May 1.

5. Colleges will not knowingly recruit or offer enrollment incentives to students who are already enrolled, registered, have declared their intent, or submitted contractual deposits to other institutions. May 1 is the point at which commitments to enroll become final, and colleges must respect that. The recognized exceptions are when students are admitted from a wait list, students initiate inquiries themselves, or cooperation is sought by institutions that provide transfer programs.

These statements capture the spirit and intent of this requirement:

- a. Whether before or after May 1, colleges may at any time respond to a student-initiated request to reconsider an offer or reinstate an application.
- b. Once students have declined an offer of admission, colleges may no longer offer them incentives to change or revisit their college decision. Before May 1, however, colleges may ask whether candidates would like a review of their financial aid package or other incentives before their admission is canceled, so long as the question is asked at the time that the admitted students first notify them of their intent to cancel their admission.
- c. After May 1, colleges may contact students who have neither deposited nor withdrawn their applications to let them know that they have not received a response from them. Colleges may neither offer nor imply additional financial aid or other incentives unless students have affirmed that they have not deposited elsewhere and are still interested in discussing fall enrollment.

6. **Deferred enrollment**

Deferred enrollment, sometimes known as deferred admission or guaranteed transfer, means that the student is enrolling for a term that is later than the one for which the student originally applied for admission. There are two kinds of deferred enrollment:

- a. **Student-requested deferral:** Colleges may grant these requests at their discretion and set an enrollment deposit deadline so long as it is not in advance of the deposit deadline for the term for which the student originally applied for admission. Colleges must clearly state their deferred enrollment policies and may prohibit deferred students from taking college-level classes elsewhere before they enroll.
- b. **College-initiated deferral:** The college defers the student, declining to offer admission for the term for which the student applied, but offering admission or “guaranteed transfer admission” for a later term. Colleges may require students to complete college-level credits elsewhere before enrollment. Colleges must, however, allow students to choose whether to earn these credits as degree-seeking or non-degree-seeking candidates, except where they have a partnership agreement with another institution that requires enrollment.

Implementation Outside the United States

1. While the admission cycle dates and deadlines are specific to institutions in the United States, members outside the US must still comply with the remaining provisions, which include incentives before students have applied for admission, notification of admission, and notification of financial aid.
2. Postsecondary member institutions that meet the following criteria must also adhere to admission cycle dates and deadlines as described:
 - a. Postsecondary member institutions whose primary location is outside the US, but maintain a campus within the US, must adhere to admission cycle dates and deadlines for first-year applicants to their US-based campuses.
 - b. Postsecondary member institutions whose primary location is within the US, but maintain a campus outside the US, must adhere to admission cycle dates and deadlines for first-year applicants to all campuses, including those located outside the US.

Section II. The Responsible Practice of College Admission

C. Wait Lists: Guiding Principles and Rationale

Wait lists give students who were not initially admitted another opportunity to be considered for admission, and they help colleges manage their enrollments. 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 no later than August 1 should space become available.

Since the number of students willing to accept an offer of admission from the wait list declines each day that colleges wait to extend an offer of admission, the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* permits colleges to assess in advance a waitlisted candidate's level of interest and financial need and to require a timely verbal commitment once an offer of admission has been extended.

Timely wait list offers and acceptances benefit other waitlisted students who want to know whether they will be admitted. They also allow other colleges to know which of their deposited students are canceling their admission to accept another college's offer from the wait list.

Implementation

1. When they initially offer students a place on a wait list, colleges must state what historically has been the range in numbers or percentages of students offered admission from the wait list and what has been the availability of housing and financial aid. Colleges may count only students who elected to remain on the wait list and may use however many years of data they deem reasonable.
2. Colleges must not require a deposit or set a fee for remaining on a wait list.
3. Colleges may ask students who have accepted a place on the wait list to indicate their level of interest, but must not ask them to rank order or identify their other college choices.
4. Until May 1, students who are offered admission from a wait list must be given at least through May 1, or 48 hours, whichever is longer, to accept the offer. This applies both to informal offers (such as requests for verbal commitments) as well as to official offers of admission. It is understood that before a deposit or other final commitment is required, students must be notified of the availability of housing and those whose financial aid application is complete must have received their financial aid award package.
5. After May 1, students who are offered admission from a wait list may be asked to commit verbally within 48 hours of the offer. Colleges may set their own deadlines for submitting enrollment deposits after students have verbally committed. It is understood that before a deposit or other final commitment is required, students must be notified of the availability of housing and those whose financial aid application is complete must have received their financial aid award package.
6. Candidates who remain on a wait list for fall admission must be notified of a final admission decision no later than August 1.

D. Transfer Admission: Guiding Principles and Rationale

Transfer admission is complex in ways that make it impractical to establish universal dates and deadlines for when applications may be accepted and when candidates must accept or decline offers of admission. Transfer admission is often contingent on the available space in the undergraduate class or in specific majors or programs or on the number of first-year students who have accepted offers of admission. This significant variation in transfer recruitment and admission practices across institutions makes it difficult to standardize the transition for transfer students.

Fairness and transparency require that transfer candidates not be asked to make a commitment to enroll until they are able to review their financial aid award and an estimate of how many credits already earned will transfer and advance them toward a degree at the receiving institution.

Implementation

1. While the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* does not set specific dates and deadlines for transfer admission, colleges must clearly state their deadlines for applying for transfer admission, financial aid, scholarships, and housing. Colleges must make good faith efforts to be flexible in enforcing commitment deadlines so that candidates have the opportunity to assess all of their transfer, financial aid, course registration, and credit evaluation options.
2. Colleges will be transparent in publishing their admission requirements for transfer candidates, including restrictions or limitations regarding particular majors or programs.
3. Colleges will publish up-to-date lists of the institutions with which they have articulated transfer agreements, including which courses and credits transfer and the minimum course grade that is acceptable for transfer.
4. Before transfer candidates are required to submit an enrollment deposit or other commitment to enroll, colleges will provide them with:
 - a. an evaluation of their prior college-level credits that is a good faith estimate of how those credits will be applied toward their graduation requirements. An online articulated transfer agreement will meet this requirement.
 - b. a financial aid award notification, as long as they have submitted all requested application forms and supporting materials by the designated deadline.
 - c. either a deposit deadline extension or, upon request, an enrollment deposit refund, if colleges cannot provide credit evaluations or aid notification and the student decides not to enroll.
5. Colleges must not solicit transfer applications from a previous year's applicant or prospect pool unless the students have themselves initiated a transfer inquiry or the college has verified prior to contacting the students that they are either enrolled at a college that allows transfer recruitment from other colleges or are not currently enrolled in a college.
6. To facilitate transfer, colleges from which a student is transferring will provide accurate, legible, and complete transcripts and other school documents for all candidates for admission or scholarships.

Section II. The Responsible Practice of College Admission

E. The Use of Commissioned Agents in International Student Recruitment: Guiding Principles and Rationale

Commissioned agents are contracted and paid by colleges that partner with them to recruit international students to their institutions and to establish a local presence in particular regions abroad. Agents advise students concerning curricula, programs, and policies and may also provide in-country marketing or other services to their institutional partners. Some agents are also paid by their student and family clients for college counseling and such additional services as assistance with visa applications, housing, and adapting to a new culture.

NACAC prohibits member institutions from using commissioned agents to recruit US citizens or US permanent residents since commissions, bonuses, or other incentive payments provided on a per capita basis can lead to biased and self-serving college counseling. Since commissioned agents may be a main source of guidance for many families in countries that lack a significant presence of school-based college counselors, independent educational consultants, and college fairs, the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* makes a limited exception when students are neither US citizens nor US permanent residents.

The *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* requires that member institutions that engage agents must ensure that their relationship is completely transparent to students and families and conducted with integrity and accountability. There are ethical obligations that must be followed to protect students, provide a way for colleges to use agents responsibly, and provide the public with a basis for distinguishing agents who are ethical from those who are not.

Implementation

1. NACAC members may have business relationships only with agents who follow these *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*' guidelines for commissioned international agents.
 - a. Agents must abide by the laws and lawful regulations of their own home countries, their students' home countries, and the countries of the postsecondary institutions with which they have a business relationship or to which they are directing their student clients. This includes neither soliciting nor accepting commissions, bonuses, or other incentive payments provided on a per capita basis for securing enrollment of US citizens, including dual citizens and permanent residents.
 - b. Agents must disclose to their student and family clients the names of all postsecondary institutions with whom they have a business relationship.
 - c. Agents must provide to both their student/family clients and their postsecondary clients a written agreement that itemizes their services and charges and confirms that they will abide by these guidelines for agents.
 - d. Agents must not be a party to fraudulent conduct or misrepresentation. This includes fraudulent visa applications, fraudulent test scores, and fraudulent admission documents, including applications, transcripts, essays, interviews, résumés, portfolios, and letters of recommendation.
 - e. Agents must not misrepresent their postsecondary client's academic and non-academic offerings, costs, facilities, admission requirements, availability of financial aid, or post-graduation outcomes.
 - f. Agents must not guarantee admission to any postsecondary institution nor guarantee or offer a financial aid or scholarship award.
 - g. Agents must not offer secondary schools or their personnel any form of compensation for the referral of student or parent clients.
 - h. Agents must not engage in misleading or fraudulent advertising of their services or publish translations that do not fully and accurately reflect the meaning of the text in the original language.
2. NACAC postsecondary members who have business relationships with commissioned agents agree to meet the following ethical standards:
 - a. Members must require agents to abide fully by the guidelines for agents that are set forth in the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*.
 - b. Members must ensure institutional accountability by monitoring the actions of those commissioned agents acting on the institution's behalf and exercise due diligence in responding to complaints of misconduct on the part of agents.
 - c. Members must disclose that they are working with agents in all promotional information directed toward international applicants. Institutional websites will list the names and contact information of all commissioned agents with whom they have a business relationship.

Admission officers and offices: Admission officers are professionals employed by or representing colleges. Their work may include some or all of the following: recruiting and counseling students about the transition to college; informing students about undergraduate admission requirements, programs, and other offerings and opportunities; reviewing and taking action on applications for admission or scholarships. Admission offices may also be referred to as enrollment management offices and admission professionals may be referred to as enrollment managers or admission counselors.

Alleged violations of the SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices: These are complaints filed by anyone against an institution or individual for noncompliance with the SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices. Alleged violations of the SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices are referred to the national or affiliate Admission Practices Committee(s) for action and are held in strict confidence by all parties.

Applications: Applications are the medium or tool used by a student to apply to college. Colleges may use their own institution-specific application form, forms that allow students to apply to multiple colleges, or a combination of the two. While some types of applications are directed at specific student populations and identified as priority applications, international student applications, visual or performing arts applications, etc., the application plans under which first-year students apply to US colleges (such as Regular Admission, Early Decision, Early Action, etc.) must always adhere to the naming conventions and stipulations that the SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices has established.

Application plans: Colleges in the US must only use plans known as Early Action, Early Decision, Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action, Regular Decision, and Rolling Admission for students applying as first-time, first-year candidates. Within these plans, colleges have a variety of deadlines and timelines for students to submit an application and to receive notification of a decision. Some colleges may also adopt a priority application deadline to alert students to academic programs and scholarships that may have limited space or funding.

Candidates for admission: Students are considered candidates for admission until they have withdrawn their applications, officially confirmed their intention to enroll (usually by submitting an enrollment deposit), declined their offer of admission, been denied admission, or have had their offer of admission canceled.

Colleges: Colleges are two-year or four-year postsecondary institutions that enroll undergraduates, grant degrees, and are accredited and not-for-profit. The SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices follows common usage in the United States where college refers to any postsecondary institution that is either a college or a university.

Commissioned agents: Commissioned agents are individuals or other third-party recruiters, sometimes working within a company or agency, who are contracted and paid by colleges on a per capita basis to recruit international students to their institutions.

Conflict of interest: A situation that has the potential to undermine the impartiality of a person because of a clash between the person's self-interest and professional interest or public interests. Conflicts of interest in admission and counseling may often be prohibited by employers, by professional organizations, by government regulations, and by accreditation agencies.

Cost of Attendance (COA): As defined by NASFAA, "Cost of Attendance is the estimated cost of attending an institution for one academic year. COA includes the following: expected charges for one year of tuition and fees (tuition = charges assessed for classes; fees = charges assessed for other college services); room and board for resident students; estimated living expense (includes allowance for rent, utilities, and food) for off-campus living; estimated transportation costs; estimated books and supplies; and miscellaneous costs."

Counselors: Counselors are professionals who advise or counsel students about making the transition from secondary school to college or about transferring from one college to another. The term typically refers to secondary school counselors, independent educational consultants, counselors associated with community-based organizations, and transfer advisers at two-year and four-year colleges.

Credit evaluation: The receiving college's review and evaluation of a transfer student's prior academic record is called credit evaluation. The process is used to determine which prior college courses and credits will be applicable to the graduation requirements at the new institution. The evaluation will include all coursework completed at postsecondary institutions as well as any credits earned through Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge, and College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exam scores.

Deadlines and time zones: When colleges specify deadlines for applications, deposits, or other commitments, the deadlines refer to the postmarked date if responses are sent by ground/air delivery. If they are sent electronically, colleges must also specify whether the deadline's time zone is the sender's or the time zone of the college.

Deferred/mid-year admission: Deferred/mid-year admission refers to offers of admission to first-time, first-year students for the spring semester/winter quarter, instead of the typical fall enrollment start date.

Deposits: Enrollment deposits are the fees or written commitments that confirm a student's intention to enroll. They may also be referred to as tuition deposits or enrollment fees.

Housing deposits are the fees that colleges require to hold a student's place in on-campus housing.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): As used in the US and as defined by NASFAA, "Expected Family Contribution is a measure of how much the student and his or her family can be expected to contribute annually to the cost of the student's education for the year. The EFC is calculated with a formula specified in the law and is based upon the information provided by the student and his or her family during the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) filing process."

Section III. Definitions of Procedures and Glossary

Federal Work-Study (FWS): As used in the US and as defined by NASFAA: “A program that provides part-time employment to students attending institutions of higher education who need the earnings to help meet their costs of postsecondary education and encourages students receiving FWS assistance to participate in community service activities.”

First-year students: Students who apply as first-time undergraduate matriculants are known as first-year students. These students typically have no previous college experience since graduating from high school.

Guaranteed transfer program: In the US, the term is used in two ways. The first describes statewide programs that ensure that community college students who complete an associate degree will be automatically eligible to transfer to four-year institutions. The second, which is how the term is used in the *SPGP: NACAC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*, describes deferred admission programs where a college declines to admit an applicant as a first-year student, but guarantees admission as a transfer student for a subsequent term so long as the candidate completes college-level courses elsewhere and meets certain other requirements.

Independent educational consultants: Independent educational consultants or counselors are professionals working on a fee for service basis who provide services exclusively to students and families in the college selection and application process.

Individuals: In the *SPGP: NACAC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*, the word individuals refers to other professionals employed by or representing an institution or organization.

Laws and regulations: Members must comply, where applicable, with local, state, or provincial, and federal or national laws and regulations. This includes, but is not limited to, student privacy, misrepresentation, incentive compensation, the issuance of visas, security, conflicts of interest, civil rights, non-discrimination, disabilities, disclosures, reporting, and transparency. In the US these include, for example, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Higher Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Clery Act, and federal, state, and local civil rights laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination.

Legacies: Legacies are applicants who have a relative (usually a parent or sibling) who is either a current student at the college or a graduate.

Members: Members are individuals, institutions, groups, or organizations that fulfill all requirements for membership in NACAC.

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA): A professional organization for financial aid administrators in the United States which sets the guidelines and ethical practices for the administration of financial aid.

Nontraditional undergraduate students: Nontraditional students are individuals who do not fall within the profile of a dependent student aged 18–24. Nontraditional students may include those who do not attend college immediately after secondary school or who return after a prolonged absence, parents of dependent children, and those who are married.

Offers of admission: Official offers of admission may be transmitted by mail, electronically, or on official websites as determined and approved by the college’s chief enrollment officer.

Organizations: In the *SPGP: NACAC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*, the word organizations refers to groups whose primary activities consist of providing counseling, admission, or financial aid services to students or providing consulting services to college admission professionals.

Permanent resident: Lawful permanent residents, also known as green card holders, are non-citizens who are lawfully authorized to live permanently within the United States.

Priority application: Colleges often use the term priority application to describe an application created for specific populations of students applying for general admission, particular programs or majors, or scholarships. It is not to be confused with application plans, which refer to when students will be notified of admission and when they must make a commitment to enroll.

Priority deadline: A priority deadline is an application deadline that colleges may establish for programs and majors that have limited space. It alerts students to the fact that, if they wait until the regular deadline, these programs may be filled. Sometimes the term is also used if students want to be considered for particular scholarships.

Secondary schools: In the United States and throughout the *SPGP: NACAC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*, secondary schools refer to the high schools that students typically attend before they begin college. They may be public or private/ independent and offer general, technical, vocational, and/or college preparatory coursework. The term may also include statewide agencies or private organizations that certify home-schooled students. While high schools typically include grades nine through 12 or 10 through 12, NACAC acknowledges that college counseling may begin well before the ninth grade.

Student-athletes: Student-athletes are students recruited by US colleges to participate in varsity athletics. Since it is understood that colleges in the US must adhere to national signing periods when recruiting students who are candidates for athletic scholarships, the recruitment of **scholarship athletes** falls under the purview of national athletic associations, rather than the *SPGP: NACAC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*. Those associations include the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA).

Transcript: A transcript is an official academic record that features a student’s course of study at an institution. Information usually includes courses taken, a progress rubric, and other indicators of the student’s academic development and achievement.

Transfer students: Transfer students have typically earned or attempted college-level course credits after graduating from secondary school and are applying as matriculants from one undergraduate institution to another. The definition of a transfer student is determined by the receiving institution and may be based on the number of credits earned or attempted at the student’s previous institution(s).

Section IV. Education, Monitoring, and Compliance Procedures

Membership in the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) is voluntary and comes with many benefits and professional responsibilities. Complying with the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* is a condition of membership in NACAC and its affiliates. It is also a condition for nonmembers who want to participate in NACAC-sponsored events, including NACAC's National College Fairs.

NACAC encourages members to submit a complaint whenever they believe that a violation of the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* has occurred. Nonmembers—including parents and students—are also encouraged to submit complaints. Complaints may be submitted directly to NACAC via its online Confidential Complaint Form or to the national or affiliate Admission Practices (AP) Committees. All complaints are investigated in the strictest confidence. It is understood that AP Committee members will recuse themselves whenever there is a conflict of interest with either the Complainant or the subject of a complaint.

In investigating and resolving cases, the primary goal of NACAC and its affiliate AP Committees is educational, rather than punitive. If sanctions are imposed, it is only after all attempts have been exhausted to educate and persuade the parties involved to come into compliance with the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*.

Since college recruitment and admission are constantly evolving, members who are developing new policies or practices are welcome to consult with us in advance to ensure that their proposals comply with the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*. We see these discussions as an important part of our educational mission.

A. Compliance Procedures Definitions

- **AP Committee:** The NACAC Admission Practices Committee or an affiliate Admission Practices Committee, as the context requires
- **Board:** The NACAC Board of Directors
- **Complaint:** A written document submitted to NACAC alleging that a person or entity is violating or has violated one or more provisions of the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*
- **Complainant:** A person or entity submitting a complaint
- **NACAC CEO:** The Chief Executive Officer of NACAC
- **Presiding Committee:** The committee to which the complaint is referred for voluntary resolution or investigation and initial decision of whether the Respondent violated the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*
- **Presiding Chair:** An AP Committee member whom the AP Committee designates to conduct an investigation of the complaint
- **Respondent:** a person or entity against whom a complaint is submitted
- **Response:** The Respondent's written response to the complaint, admitting or denying the alleged violation

B. The Complaint and Response

1. Any person or entity, including NACAC, its AP Committee, and any affiliate AP Committee, may submit a complaint alleging that the Respondent is violating or has violated the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*

2. A complaint must include:
 - a. the identity of the Complainant and Respondent
 - b. the provision of the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* that the Respondent allegedly violated
 - c. an explanation of all facts supporting the alleged violation
 - d. all documents and other information that the Complainant believes support the allegation of violation
 - e. the time period during which the Complainant believes the alleged violation occurred
 - f. the identity of all other persons whom the Complainant believes have information relevant to the alleged violation.
3. The complaint must be submitted to the NACAC CEO. The NACAC CEO, with the concurrence of the NACAC AP Committee, may decline to initiate an investigation if the complaint is frivolous on its face; and the CEO may decline to initiate an investigation if a court, governmental agency, or other professional organization is reviewing the same or similar alleged conduct.
4. The CEO will send the complaint to the Respondent by postal mail or email. Any information that would permit the Respondent to identify the Complainant, the Complainant's workplace, or the student or parent will be removed.

Section IV. Education, Monitoring, and Compliance Procedures

5. Within 30 days of receiving the complaint, the Respondent must submit a response to the NACAC CEO. It is understood that the investigation may require exchanges of phone calls, emails, videoconferencing, or other communications to achieve a resolution. Since complaints are often time-sensitive, the most expedient method of contact should be used. The response should:
 - a. admit or deny the violation alleged in the complaint
 - b. If the alleged violation is denied, explain all reasons for the denial, submit all documents supporting the denial, and provide any other factual information that the Respondent believes supports the denial
 - c. If the alleged violation is admitted, provide any information that explains or justifies the violation and indicate what corrective action the Respondent is taking to come into compliance.
6. If the Respondent does not submit a response within the 30-day period, the alleged violation will be deemed admitted.

C. Referral of the Complaint

1. Membership status at the time a complaint was lodged will determine the Presiding AP Committee. Should the subjects of a complaint resign their membership or fail to renew membership before a complaint has been resolved, the investigation will continue as if they were still members and penalties may be imposed for noncompliance. The NACAC CEO will refer the complaint to the appropriate Presiding Committee for voluntary resolution or investigation and initial decision. The Presiding Committee may appoint a Presiding Chair with primary responsibility for voluntary resolution or investigation.
 - a. If the Respondent is a member of the NACAC affiliate of the state or region in which the Respondent is located, the NACAC CEO or AP Committee Chair will refer the complaint to that affiliate's AP Committee, which will serve as the Presiding Committee to seek a voluntary resolution or conduct an investigation and issue an initial decision. The affiliate AP Committee will fully inform and update the Chair of NACAC's AP Committee about any voluntary resolution or investigation of the alleged violation. If the affiliate AP Committee Presiding Committee cannot voluntarily resolve the complaint, cannot adequately investigate the complaint or reach an initial decision, or declares a conflict of interest in investigating the complaint, it will refer the complaint for voluntary resolution or investigation and initial decision to the NACAC AP Committee, which will designate one of its members as the Presiding Committee to conduct the investigation and render an initial decision.
 - b. If the Respondent is a member of NACAC but not a member of an affiliate, the NACAC CEO will refer the complaint to the NACAC AP Committee, which must designate one of its members as the Presiding Committee for voluntary resolution or investigation and initial decision.

- c. If the Respondent is neither a member of NACAC nor a member of a NACAC affiliate, the NACAC CEO or his or her designee will serve as the presiding committee to seek a voluntary resolution or investigate the complaint and render an initial decision.

D. Voluntary Resolution, Investigation, and Initial Decision

1. The Presiding Committee will make every reasonable effort to reach a voluntary resolution of the complaint. A successful voluntary resolution occurs when the Presiding Committee determines, through a written agreement with the Respondent, that the Respondent is modifying, or will modify, its conduct to comply with the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* in the future. The Presiding Committee will notify the NACAC CEO of any voluntary resolution and any agreement with the Respondent to implement the resolution.

In reaching a voluntary resolution, the Presiding Committee understands that full, immediate compliance in the current admission cycle may not always be possible. Thus, through a voluntary resolution agreement with the Respondent, the Presiding Committee may impose interim conditions that result in full compliance in all subsequent admission cycles or other conditions appropriate in the circumstances.

2. If the Respondent denies the alleged violation and the Presiding Committee and Respondent cannot voluntarily resolve the complaint, the Presiding Committee will investigate to determine whether, more likely than not, the Respondent violated the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*. In doing so, it may:
 - a. conduct its investigation by telephone conference, email, correspondence, video conference, in-person meeting, or other forms of communication
 - b. request further documentation and information from the complainant and Respondent
 - c. interview the Complainant, Respondent, and third-parties, including affiliates, that may have knowledge of relevant facts.
3. If the Respondent refuses to cooperate in the investigation in a reasonable manner, the alleged violation will be deemed admitted.

E. Appeal to the NACAC AP Committee

1. The Respondent may appeal the Presiding Committee's initial decision and any recommendation for a sanction to the NACAC AP Committee. To do so, the Respondent must:
 - a. within 20 days of receiving the Presiding Committee's initial decision and recommendation, notify the NACAC CEO and AP Committee by letter or email that it intends to appeal
 - b. within 30 days of receiving the initial decision and recommendation, submit to the NACAC AP Committee any written materials supporting its appeal

- c. if it chooses to meet with the NACAC AP Committee, submit a request for meeting, which may be in-person, by telephone, or by video conferencing, at the discretion of the NACAC AP Committee.
2. If the complaint was referred to the NACAC AP Committee and the investigation was conducted and the initial decision and recommendation of a sanction was made by the Presiding Chair of the NACAC AP Committee acting as the Presiding Committee, the Presiding Chair will be recused from participating in the appeal.
3. At its discretion, the NACAC AP Committee may attempt to reach a voluntary resolution of the complaint with the Respondent.
4. Absent a successful voluntary resolution, the NACAC AP Committee will review the entire record of the investigation and any other materials submitted by the Respondent in support of the appeal and then accept or reject the presiding committee's initial decision that the Respondent violated the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*. The decision to accept or reject the initial decision is final. If the NACAC AP Committee agrees that the Respondent violated the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*, it will consider whether to recommend a sanction after consideration of the Presiding Committee's recommendation. It will prepare a brief report of its conclusion and sanction recommendation, if any, and transmit copies by postal mail or email to the Respondent, the Complainant, the Chair of the Respondent's affiliate AP Committee and, if a sanction is recommended, to the Board of Directors.

F. Appeal to the NACAC Board

1. If the NACAC AP Committee recommends a sanction, the Respondent, within 30 days after receiving the NACAC AP Committee's recommendation, may appeal that recommendation to the Board of Directors. To do so, the Respondent must submit a paper to the board explaining why no sanction is appropriate or why the recommended sanction is inappropriate. At its discretion, the board may invite or permit the Respondent to meet with it in-person, by telephone, or by video conference.
2. Any member of the Board of Directors who participated in the NACAC AP Committee's consideration of the appeal from the Presiding Committee will be recused from participating in the appeal.
3. The board will determine whether to impose a sanction; the sanction, if any, to be imposed; and on whom the sanction will be imposed, including individuals, institutions, or other entities. It will notify the Respondent and any others on whom a sanction will be imposed by postal mail or email. Its decision on any sanction is final.

G. Sanctions

The Presiding Committee, and the NACAC AP Committee after appeal, may recommend, and the Board of Directors may impose, the following sanctions:

1. Exclusion from all NACAC-sponsored events, including, but not limited to NACAC National College Fairs, NACAC professional development opportunities, and NACAC national conferences. This may be applied in cases where the Respondent agrees to amend its practices, but because the violation is particularly egregious or because of repeated violations, the NACAC Board of Directors determines that this sanction is appropriate.
2. Suspension of membership in NACAC and all membership privileges. Suspension of membership includes exclusion from all NACAC-sponsored events. The board may require the suspended member to demonstrate full compliance over a specific period of time before membership privileges may be reinstated.
3. Termination of membership in NACAC. Termination of membership includes exclusion from all NACAC-sponsored events and will apply when the violation is particularly egregious, the Respondent has a history of violating the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*, and the Respondent refuses to agree to comply with the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*. The minimum length of membership termination is two years. At the two-year anniversary of membership termination, the Respondent may reapply for membership, and the board may, at its discretion, reinstate the Respondent upon demonstration of previous compliance with the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* for a reasonable period of time and agreement to comply with the *SPGP: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices* in the future.
4. NACAC encourages affiliates to apply a similar sanction, such as exclusion from affiliate activities and suspension or termination of affiliate membership, on individuals, institutions, or other entities subject to a NACAC sanction. The decision whether to do so, however, remains the individual and independent decision of each affiliate.

H. Confidentiality

All parties involved in any compliance procedure should keep entirely confidential the fact and substance of all complaints, responses, investigations, information obtained during investigations, reports, decisions, and recommendations, except that NACAC, when appropriate and at its discretion, may post on its website, without comment or explanation, that the Respondent or an institution or other entity is not eligible to participate in NACAC-sponsored events or that its membership in NACAC has been suspended or terminated.



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