



National Association for
College Admission Counseling

**STATEMENT ON THE
Counseling Dimension of the Admission
Process at the College/University Level**

Approved by the Executive Board, October 1990

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) has long been an advocate of the counseling dimension of the college admission process. The Association was founded in 1937 to establish a code of ethics that would guide colleges and universities in their relationships with students and secondary school counselors and, concomitantly, to promote the interests of students over those of institutions.

As the door to higher education opened wider and greater numbers of students were encouraged to seek admission, there developed a need to help students understand the differences among the variety of institutions and the array of educational programs available to them. It also became necessary to determine the quality of students' secondary school preparation and to direct them to programs of study that would enable them to continue to grow both personally and academically.

Because of the increased diversity of the American system of postsecondary education, the need continues today for helpful guidance to assist students in making decisions to best meet their individual needs among the full range of postsecondary choices. In addition, the cost of higher education today and the heightened concern regarding families' ability to pay for it place a high demand on the need for accurate, timely financial aid and planning information. Such guidance and counseling must come from both the secondary school counselor and college admission counselor.

While the traditional college-going population remained stable in recent years and the predictions of dramatically declining numbers remained largely unrealized, we are now beginning to experience real demographic shifts in the population that may have a significant influence on college and university enrollment in the coming years. Increased recruitment efforts, the introduction of marketing concepts and the trend toward enrollment management have led to the perception, real or imagined, that recruitment and marketing techniques are taking the place of counseling. It has been suggested that while encouraging the optimum fit between student and institution was once considered important, what counts most today is using any means possible to attract students to meet enrollment and economic targets.

NACAC stands firm in its position that counseling has been and continues to be an essential, if not the most essential, ingredient in the college admission process. The development of human resources and the assurance that each student will be helped to realize his/her educational potential can only strengthen and perpetuate the strong democracy we so proudly enjoy—the democracy that, in turn, encourages and supports our diverse educational system.

NACAC believes that precollege guidance and counseling is a developmental process that begins early in the educational experience and continues through secondary school and on into college. College admission counselors stand with school counselors at the juncture between secondary and postsecondary education and together they play a pivotal role in helping to ease students' transition from one level to the next. We also believe in the dignity and worth of every human being and in the right to develop their full potential. Counseling individual students about postsecondary plans and during the school to college transition is a fundamental aspect of the admission process of institutions of higher learning.

The College Admission Counseling Initiative

The foundation for counseling students for college admission is the emphasis on meeting students' needs. This perspective assumes the availability of individual and group counseling aimed at helping students understand their personal aptitudes, abilities, interests, and values in relation to the offerings of a particular college or university. Appropriate counseling interventions can occur during college day/night programs, college fairs, interview sessions, campus tours, and student/parent information sessions on campus.

Institutions that promote a counseling perspective provide assurance that the admission staff includes trained professionals with appropriate counseling and related skills, and there is a willingness to assume responsibility for all institutional personnel who may become involved in the process of counseling students for admission (e.g. alumni, coaches, faculty, and students on campus). Further, effective linkages with secondary schools, community agencies, other campus student services offices, and the college faculty are developed and lead to open communication, understanding, and cooperation. Such programs are also characterized by the following:

- A clearly defined institutional mission, including written goals and objectives of the admission program, and an evaluation component that seeks to understand what is being done and that serves as a basis for major institutional decisions.
- Availability of clear, accurate information about the institution, including admission requirements, educational programs, costs and financial assistance that will enable students to reach sound decisions.
- Emphasis on equity and accessibility and a commitment to the needs of underrepresented students. This assumes the presence of positive attitudes that promote student development regardless of race, sex, or disability and support the inclusion of role models among the staff and faculty who reflect these characteristics.
- Delivery of services according to ethical practices developed by NACAC and other similar education groups.
- Referral of students to other institutions when it is determined that students' needs can be better met elsewhere.
- Emphasis on student retention, including the existence of adequate academic and other support services to insure the success of admitted students.
- A supportive administration and campus environment that promotes student growth and development.

NACAC encourages all collegiate institutions to review their admission programs from this perspective. The entire process is predicated on the ability of professionals to relate to and respond to student needs. This is done in collaboration with other counselors and educators who share these beliefs and place the highest value on student development and the realization of student potential.