



Preface

A statement of Standards and Ethics is not meant to address, nor can it be expected to address, all questions or concerns that might arise in the conduct of working with students, families, high schools, colleges, universities, and other professionals as an education consultant. Rather, a Statement of Standards and Ethics provides a framework, or a guide. It is expected that members of the Higher Education Consultants Association will uphold the following Statement of Standards and Ethics as they conduct their practice.

Statement of Standards and Ethics

HECA Mission Statement:

The mission of the Higher Education Consultants Association is to foster a culture of support for the HECA community to develop personally, professionally, and ethically.

Core Values of the Higher Education Consultants Association

The Higher Education Consultants Association Standards and Ethics Statement is based on four core values:

Ethical Counsel:

HECA members discuss appropriate educational options with students and families and make referrals to other members/organizations when indicated.

Integrity:

HECA members clearly communicate what services they offer and do not guarantee admission or financial aid results. HECA members act in the best interest of the student.

Respect:

HECA members respect the student/school relationship. They strive to work as a team with other independent consultants, high school counselors, and related professionals. They respect students' work and encourage student ownership of the application process.

Confidentiality:

HECA members respect the confidential nature of their relationships with students, families, and related professionals.

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In light of our stated mission and guided by our core values of ethical counsel, integrity, respect, and confidentiality, the HECA Board of Directors has approved this Statement of Standards and Ethics for HECA members. A statement of Standards and Ethics is not meant to address, nor can it be expected to address, all questions or concerns that might arise in the conduct of working with students, families, high schools, colleges, universities, and other professionals as an education consultant. Rather, a Statement of Standards and Ethics provides a framework, or a guide.

As a professional community, we members of the Higher Education Consultants Association will hold ourselves and each other accountable for upholding the HECA Standards and Ethics Statement as we conduct our practices. HECA members pledge to act in accordance with the following Principles and Standards:

1. Standards for Working with Students and Families
2. Standards with Respect to Relations with High Schools and Colleges/Universities
3. Standards with Respect to Relations with Vendors
4. Standards for the Education Consulting Profession
5. Code of Conduct for Individual Consultants

I. HECA Standards for Working with Students and Families

HECA members shall:

- A. Serve the interests of students and families by providing accurate, unbiased information about the college planning and decision-making processes.
- B. Respect issues of confidentiality and students' rights to privacy throughout the process. Confidential information is shared with others only with the written consent of the student and/or family.
- C. Respect the values and expectations of students and families while presenting professional advice that is sound, honest, and candid.
- D. Respect the college planning and decision-making processes as learning opportunities for the student and family. In this spirit, the HECA member counsels and advises in the college research process, provides guidance, direction, and review, but does not complete or submit a college application on behalf of a student.
- E. Provide information to students and families that is:

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1. Accurate and timely, and is based on research, college visits, participation in professional organizations and attendance at national and regional educational conferences and meetings.
 2. Based on evaluation of the student's academic record, standardized tests, interests, activities, future plans, and family circumstances.
- F. Counsel and encourage students and parents to approach the college application and admission process ethically and honestly.
- G. Advise students and families of the importance of taking responsibility for understanding the policies, requirements, and timeliness in meeting deadlines for each college to which they apply.
- H. Remuneration between educational consultants as a referral fee exchange is not a violation of HECA Standards and Ethics, provided the client is informed of the financial arrangement and it is in the best interest of the student. At face value, referral fees distract from the collegiality HECA strives to maintain. Paid referral arrangements should involve more than sharing names and instead consist of continued involvement on the student's behalf.

II. HECA Standards with Respect to Relations with High Schools and Colleges/Universities

HECA members shall:

- A. Respect the procedures and requirements of the student's high school and prospective colleges and seek to complement the work of high school counselors and work cooperatively and collaboratively.
- B. Neither solicit nor accept remuneration, gifts, services, or rewards from any institution, agency, or organization for the placement or recruitment of students. To do so is considered outside the realm of ethical behavior. This policy is not intended to apply to gifts of nominal value, nor to fly-ins or campus visits, which are considered a beneficial part of the consultant's education.



III. HECA Standards with Respect to Relations with Vendors

HECA members:

- A. May not receive commissions of any amount. However, HECA encourages vendors to offer discounts and/or scholarships to clients of HECA members.
- B. Vendor-sponsored counselor meetings are acceptable for professional development of HECA members.

IV. Standards for the Education Consultant Profession

HECA members shall:

- A. Acknowledge one's own limits in terms of knowledge, experience, and expertise, and make referrals, as appropriate.
- B. Accurately, and with integrity, represent and promote their services in writing, including statements of fees and payments.
- C. Agree that promise or guarantee of college and/or university placement is beyond the scope of an education consultant and may not be communicated or inferred from written or verbal statements made by a HECA member.
- D. Avoid conflict of interest or the perception thereof. It is incumbent on the HECA member to acknowledge the source and scope of such conflict. The client is thus given the opportunity to proceed or end the relationship.
- E. HECA members adhere to and uphold the standards and ethics of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) *Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission* with particular attention to the Recommended Practices for Implementation sections.

V. Code of Conduct for Individual Consultants

HECA members shall:

- A. Act professionally, responsibly, and ethically in all relationships with students, families, high schools, college admission personnel, and colleagues.
- B. Recognize the importance of confidentiality in performing their work.

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- C. Act with integrity, respect, courtesy, and thoughtfulness in all transactions.

Recognizing there are specific issues that are common to education consultants in the conduct of their practice, the following Statements serve to guide HECA members in interpreting and applying the HECA Statement of Standards and Ethics:

In the conduct of their practice, HECA members shall:

1. Represent and promote their services with accuracy and honesty.
2. Not accept any reward, service, or remuneration from any college, university, agency, or organization for placement, referral, or recruitment of students. This does not apply to gifts of nominal value that in no way obligate the recipient.
3. Comply with all laws and regulations regarding students' rights to privacy with particular attention to regulations in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, FERPA.
4. Respect all student information (including transcript, test scores, financial resources, institutional preferences) as confidential.
5. Secure permission from the student and/or family before revealing any information about students or their admission process, including but not limited to decisions and/or scholarship and financial aid awards.
6. Not make any written or verbal guarantee of college admission or placement, or of financial aid or scholarship awards.
7. Not make disparaging statements about postsecondary institutions.
8. Not make unethical or unprofessional requests of, nor make disparaging statements about, school-based counselors, college admissions representatives, or other independent education consultants.
9. Not advocate to colleges or universities on behalf of students, unless expressly invited to do so by the college.
10. With written student and/or family permission, a HECA member may confer with high school counselors, college representatives, and related professionals on matters related to college admissions and financial aid.
11. Counsel students to meet all application requirements and deadlines.
12. Counsel students to respect the college planning and application policies and requirements of his/her high school.
13. Caution and advise students to use internet resources with maturity and discretion.
14. Be encouraged to actively engage in pro bono work and to volunteer in education-related professional and community organizations.

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Further, in their work with students HECA members strive to:

1. Approach and conduct the college planning and application process in an ethical, conscientious, and responsible manner.
2. Introduce a range of post-secondary opportunities and programs to students and their families while recognizing decisions are made by the student and/or family. Encourage students and families to conduct thorough research of the academic and co-curricular programs, selection process, and other distinguishing features, of colleges and universities.
3. Assist students to develop a list of colleges that are a "good-fit" – a list that is balanced, realistic, and reasonable in number.
4. Provide information about scholarships and the financial aid application process.
5. Encourage students to utilize the resources of their high school, the high school counselors, and advisors.
6. Provide advice that is consistent with the policies and procedures set forth by the student's high school regarding enrollment in rigorous or higher-level courses.
7. Advise students on the types and uses of standardized admission tests and not suggest special educational testing for the sole purpose of securing extended testing time.
8. Advise students to be the sole author of their application and essays, and counsel against inappropriate assistance from others – however well meaning. HECA members may provide general guidance, direction, and review of the application, as needed, to minimize unintentional errors and omissions.
9. Assist students in approaching the college admission and decision-making process in an organized manner.
10. Advise students to report changes in the academic record or personal conduct once an application is submitted.
11. Advise students to notify colleges in a timely manner of their intent to withdraw an application, accept or decline offers of admission, and to deposit at only one school.
12. Advise students who choose to defer admission that they should follow all conditions as outlined by the deferring college.

Incorporating the Mandatory and Best Practices of the NACAC *Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission*, this Standards and Ethics Statement approved by the Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA) Board of Directors, September 21, 2022.