



## PREFACE

A statement of Standards and Ethics is not meant, 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 and universities, and colleagues as an education consultant. Rather, a Statement of Standards and Ethics provides a framework, 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.

### Higher Education Consultants Association Standards and Ethics

The purpose of the Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA) is to support and advance the work of educational consultants as they work with students and families in the transition from secondary schools to undergraduate and graduate programs.

Guided by a set of Core Values:

- Sound Advice
- Integrity
- Respect and
- Confidentiality

HECA members pledge to act in accordance with the following set of Principles and Standards:

#### **I. Standards for Working with Students and Families**

HECA members:

- 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 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. Counsel and encourage students and parents to approach the college application and admission process ethically and honestly.
- F. Advise students and families of the policies and requirements of each college to which they apply and the importance of accuracy, full disclosure, and timeliness in meeting deadlines.

## **II. Standards With Respect to Relations with High Schools and Colleges**

HECA members:

- A. Provide information to students and families that is:
  - 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 and interests, activities, and future plans.
- B. Respect the procedures and requirements of the student's high school.
- C. 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 (such as school pens, mugs, pennants, notepads with insignias) that do not, in any way, obligate the recipient.
- D. Seek to complement the work of high school counselors and to work cooperatively and collaboratively.

### **III. Standards of the 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. If potential for conflict of interest is present, it is incumbent on the HECA member to acknowledge, in writing, 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 NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice with particular attention to the Mandatory Practices and Best Practices sections.

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

Recognizing there are specific issues that are common to educational 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 re students' rights to privacy with particular attention to regulations in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, FERPA.
4. Secure permission from the student and parent(s) before revealing admission decisions and/or scholarship and financial aid awards.
5. Not make any written or verbal guarantee of college admission or placement, or guarantees of financial aid or scholarship awards.
6. Not make disparaging comparisons of post secondary institutions.
7. Not make unethical or unprofessional requests of, nor make disparaging remarks about, school-based counselors or college admission officers.
8. Not lobby colleges or universities on behalf of students.
9. Respect all student information (including transcript, test scores, financial resources, institutional preferences) as confidential.
10. With written family permission, a HECA member may confer with high school counselors/advisors on matters related to college admission.
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.

**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 family.
3. 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.
4. Assist students to develop a list of colleges that are a "good-fit" – a list that is

balanced, realistic, and reasonable in number.

5. Provide information about scholarships and the financial aid application process.
6. Encourage students to utilize the resources of their high school, the high school counselors, and advisors.
7. Provide advice that is consistent with the policies and procedures set forth by the student's high school regarding enrollment in honors, AP and IB level courses.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Assist students in approaching the college admission and decision-making process in an organized manner
11. Encourage students to meet all application requirements in a timely manner and to respect additional requirements set forth in Early Decision (ED), Early Action (EA), and Restricted Early Action (REA) plans.
12. Advise students to report changes in the academic record or personal conduct once an application is submitted.
13. Advise students to notify colleges in a timely manner of their intent to accept or decline offers of admission and to deposit at only one school.
14. 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 Statement of Principles of Good Practice and Statement of Principles of Good Practice of the Independent College Counselors of Northern California (San Francisco/Bay Area)

Statement Approved by HECA  
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