



# KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM NACAC 2025

**College Essay Guy**

# Thursday, Sept. 18

## 10 Admissions Secrets That Your Families Do Not Know

### Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Gabe Brown, Associate Director of Admissions, University of Notre Dame
- Stefanie Drugan, College & HS Counselor, Grandview Heights High School
- Cari Schultz, Associate Director of Admissions, Regional Queens University of Charlotte
- Kelly Watson, Regional UA Admissions Advisor, The University of Alabama

### Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Summer Programs & Motivation
  - Expensive summer programs can offer students a preview of the college process and campus life, but participation should not be solely for admissions "bonus points."
  - Students should reflect deeply on why they are interested in a particular college, beyond superficial reasons.
- Demonstrated Interest & Tracking
  - Colleges track student engagement in various ways, including email opens, website visits, and use of online tools.
  - Even if a college says it does not use demonstrated interest, predictive modeling may still influence admissions decisions.
- Application Review Process
  - The average application review takes about 15 minutes, though this varies by institution and reader experience.
  - Admissions professionals look for fit and context, not just grades and test scores. Conciseness and prioritization in the activities list are important.
- Who Reads Applications?
  - It is not always the admissions counselor; many institutions use teams of trained readers, sometimes including retired professionals or staff from other departments.
  - The process and number of readers can vary widely between colleges.
- Application Grouping & Context
  - Applications are sometimes read in groups by high school to provide context, but this is not universal and depends on timing and institutional priorities.
  - There is no strict quota for students from a particular school or region.
- GPA Calculation
  - Colleges may recalculate GPAs using their own criteria, often focusing on core courses and stripping out weighting.
  - It is important for school profiles to clearly explain grading systems and course offerings.
- Institutional Priorities
  - Admissions decisions are influenced by institutional needs (e.g., gender balance, specific majors, geographic diversity), which are set by leadership and may not be transparent or controllable by applicants or counselors.

- Waitlists
  - Waitlist decisions are not strictly ranked; they are used to fill institutional needs as they arise.
  - Students should be encouraged to finish their senior year strong, as final grades can impact both admission and scholarship offers.
- Rescinded Offers
  - Offers can be rescinded for reasons beyond poor grades, including behavioral issues, dishonesty, or inappropriate use of AI.
  - Social media is not routinely checked, but tips or concerning content can prompt a review.
- The Human Side of Admissions
  - Admissions counselors are advocates for students and do not enjoy denying applicants.
  - Building relationships and open communication with admissions reps can be valuable.
- Advice for College Counselors for Upcoming Admissions Cycles:
  - Ensure school profiles are clear, are concise, and accurately describe grading and course rigor.
  - Advise students to be authentic in their applications and to focus on fit rather than perceived “admissions advantages.”
  - Remind students that demonstrated interest can be tracked in subtle ways; encourage meaningful engagement with colleges.
  - Prepare students for the possibility of waitlists and the importance of maintaining strong academic and behavioral records through the end of senior year.
  - Stay informed about institutional priorities and communicate any relevant context about students or your school to admissions reps.
  - Encourage students to interact with admissions counselors as people, not just gatekeepers, and to seek advice or clarification when needed.
  - Be proactive in following up with students who make changes to their senior schedules, and communicate with colleges as necessary to avoid negative impacts on admissions or scholarships.

## **Notetaker**

- Kevin Ma

# Inside One University's Approach to Admissions Fraud: Challenges, Strategies, and Solutions

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Carol Kim, Vice President for Global Recruitment, Admission and Financial Aid, New York University
- William Sichel, Assistant Vice President of Undergraduate Admissions, New York University

## Session Overview

- The seminar, led by Carol Kim (VP for Global Recruitment, Admissions, and Financial Aid at NYU) and Billy (Assistant VP of Undergraduate Admissions at NYU), focused on the growing sophistication and prevalence of admissions fraud in higher education.
- The session aimed to share NYU's experiences as a case study, discuss the types of fraud encountered, outline institutional responses, and foster a collaborative approach with college counselors and other stakeholders.
- The presenters emphasized the need for transparency, community action, and proactive measures to protect the integrity of the admissions process while supporting honest students.

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Types of Admissions Fraud:
  - Transcript forgery: Students submitting fake or altered high school or university transcripts, sometimes hiding poor grades from previous schools.
  - University transfer fraud: Fraudulent college/university transcripts, often from well-known institutions, used to transfer credits illegitimately.
  - U.S. schools abroad: Transcripts from international campuses of U.S.-accredited high schools, some of which may not be legitimate or may misrepresent a student's actual attendance/location.
  - Identity theft: Cases where real documentation is submitted, but not by the actual student (e.g., someone applying in another's name for financial gain).
- NYU's Response and Policies:
  - Use of third-party evaluators (e.g., ECE) for international transcripts, though these are not foolproof.
  - Strong reliance on counselor networks for verification and information sharing.
  - In-house training for admissions staff to spot signs of fraud and a dedicated review process for suspicious applications.
  - Only accepting official electronic transcripts for transfers; paper transcripts are subject to extra scrutiny.
  - Maintaining a flagged list of schools with known fraud issues, with varying levels of verification required.
  - Clear, public definitions of what constitutes admissions fraud, soon to be published on NYU's website.

- A stepwise policy for handling discovered fraud, including withdrawal of applications, revocation of admission, and, in severe cases, retroactive cancellation of credits and expulsion for current students.
- Emphasis on the time-consuming and complex nature of fraud investigations, involving legal, academic, and student support offices.
- Ethical and Practical Challenges:
  - Balancing transparency and deterrence with not discouraging honest applicants.
  - The difficulty of drawing the line between reasonable verification and excessive skepticism.
  - The need for national conversation and collaboration to address fraud without sensationalizing the issue.
- Guidance for College Counselors: What to Be Attentive to
  - Vigilance and Verification:
    - Be alert to the possibility of sophisticated fraud, including forged transcripts and identity theft, even from familiar or reputable institutions.
    - Maintain open communication with university admissions offices and be responsive when contacted for verification or investigation support.
    - Encourage students and families to avoid unscrupulous agents or services promising admissions "inside tracks."
  - Education and Transparency:
    - Clearly communicate to students and families the seriousness of misrepresentation and the potential consequences (e.g., revoked admission, loss of credits, legal ramifications).
    - Share information about institutional policies and definitions of fraud, and direct families to official resources (such as NYU's forthcoming website statement).
  - Collaboration and Advocacy:
    - Participate in broader conversations about admissions integrity, both within your school and with higher education partners.
    - Advocate for clear, fair, and consistent policies that protect honest students while ensuring due process for those accused of fraud.
  - Proactive Safeguards:
    - Stay informed about new types of fraud and evolving tactics (e.g., use of generative AI in essays, new school formations).
    - Support ongoing training for yourself and your colleagues to recognize red flags and understand institutional processes.
  - Student Support:
    - Recognize that not all students involved in fraud are fully aware of the implications; provide guidance and support, especially in complex or high-stakes cases.
- Additional Guidance and Considerations for College Counselors
  - Practical Tips and Limitations:
    - While there are tools and audit logs (e.g., in Slate and other CRMs) that can help identify patterns of fraud, the presenters were cautious about sharing specific detection methods in a public forum to avoid enabling bad actors.

- Counselors should be aware that new schools (including home schools and small institutions) appear every year, making it challenging to verify every applicant's background. NYU's approach is to trust new institutions unless given a reason not to, but with an extra layer of scrutiny for unfamiliar schools.
    - There is no one-size-fits-all solution; each institution must determine its own risk tolerance and verification processes, balancing thoroughness with fairness and efficiency.
  - Ethical Dilemmas and Institutional Integrity:
    - The seminar addressed the emotional and ethical difficulty of enforcing strict consequences (such as expulsion and loss of credits) for students found to have committed fraud, especially when the student may have been unaware of the full implications or was close to graduation.
    - NYU's stance is that maintaining institutional integrity and fairness to all applicants requires consistent enforcement of policies, even in difficult cases. Exceptions could undermine the credibility of the admissions process.
  - Legal and Policy Implications:
    - Legal consequences for fraud vary by country and situation. In the U.S., students may face legal action if fraud is tied to financial aid or institutional funding, but most cases are handled administratively by the university.
    - Collaboration with legal counsel, academic leadership, and student support services is essential when addressing confirmed cases of fraud.
  - Communication and Outreach:
    - NYU is working to make information about admissions fraud and its policies more visible to prospective students and families, including clear definitions and warnings on their website and in information sessions.
    - The presenters encouraged feedback from counselors on how best to communicate these messages and support honest applicants.
  - Ongoing Dialogue and National Conversation:
    - The seminar concluded with a call for ongoing partnership between universities and high school counselors to address admissions fraud collectively.
    - The presenters emphasized the need for a national conversation that avoids sensationalism but promotes integrity, transparency, and shared responsibility.
    - Counselors were invited to share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improving the process and supporting students.
- Final Calls to Action and Resources
  - For College Counselors:
    - Stay engaged with university partners and professional networks to share information and best practices.
    - Advocate for clear, accessible resources for students and families about the risks and consequences of admissions fraud.

- Encourage a culture of honesty and integrity in the application process, and provide support for students navigating complex or unfamiliar situations.
- For Institutions:
  - Continue to refine and publicize policies on admissions fraud.
  - Invest in staff training, technology, and partnerships to detect and prevent fraud.
  - Foster open communication with counselors and applicants to build trust and transparency.
- Contact and Collaboration:
  - The presenters provided their contact information and encouraged attendees to reach out for further discussion, collaboration, or to share ideas for future initiatives.

## **Notetaker**

- Kevin Ma

# Seeing the Past and Creating the Future of College Admissions

## Session Overview

- The seminar focused on recent trends in college admissions, particularly regarding diversity among applicants, admitted, and enrolled students at four-year institutions.
- It examined the impact of major policy changes, including the shift to test-optional policies during COVID-19, the Supreme Court's SFFA decision on race in admissions, the revised FAFSA rollout, and increased scrutiny of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) efforts.
- The session presented findings from a collaborative research project involving NACAC, the Urban Institute, and USC, using both institutional data and survey responses to analyze changes in applicant pools and recruitment strategies over the past five years.
- The seminar also discussed the challenges of collecting and interpreting admissions data, the importance of research-practice partnerships, and strategies for communicating findings to the public and families.

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Enrollment data alone does not tell the full story of access and diversity in college admissions; it is crucial to analyze applicant and admit pools as well.
- There have been increases in the share of Black and Hispanic applicants and enrolled students, but not always in the share of admitted students, suggesting changes in yield and recruitment effectiveness.
- Asian applicants saw a recent decline in their share of the applicant pool but an increase in admits, while their enrollment share declined, possibly due to choosing other institutions.
- White students' share is declining across all stages, but they remain overrepresented among admits and enrollees relative to their applicant share.
- Academic factors (GPA, curriculum strength) remain the most important in admissions decisions, with contextual factors (first-gen status, high school context) playing a secondary role.
- Private and selective institutions place more emphasis on holistic factors (essays, recommendations, extracurriculars), while public and less selective institutions focus more on academic metrics and in-state recruitment.
- There is a lack of standardized, national data on applicants and admits by race/ethnicity, income, and academic preparation, making it difficult to fully understand trends and ensure equity.
- Data integrity and consistency are critical, especially as new federal data collections (e.g., IPEDS) are proposed; there are concerns about definitions and comparability across institutions.
- There is a need for greater transparency in admissions processes and for communicating clearly with students and families about what matters in admissions.
- What College Counselors Should Be Attentive to for Upcoming Admissions Cycles

- Stay informed about ongoing policy changes (e.g., legal rulings, FAFSA updates, anti-DEI legislation) and how they may affect institutional admissions practices and student opportunities.
- Emphasize to students and families that academic preparation (GPA, rigorous coursework) remains central, but that holistic factors (essays, extracurriculars, recommendations) are increasingly important at selective institutions.
- Encourage students to authentically share their lived experiences and backgrounds in essays, as these remain valid and valued, despite confusion around recent legal decisions.
- Help families understand that admissions is not a one-size-fits-all process; each institution may weigh factors differently, and transparency is improving but still limited.
- Be proactive in seeking out and sharing reliable data about admissions trends, and help students interpret what matters most for their target institutions.
- Engage with opportunities for professional development, such as joining practitioner email lists, attending conferences, and participating in research or focus groups to stay current on best practices.
- Advocate for clear communication from colleges about their admissions criteria and processes, and help dispel myths or misunderstandings in your school communities.

## **Notetaker**

- Kevin Ma

## AANHPI SIG Meeting

### Session Overview

The seminar brought together college admissions professionals and independent educational consultants to discuss the unique experiences, challenges, and opportunities facing Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) students and families in the college admissions process. Panelists shared personal backgrounds, professional insights, and practical strategies for supporting AANHPI students, with a focus on authenticity, cultural context, and holistic admissions. The session also addressed the importance of collaboration among counselors, outreach to families, and debunking stereotypes about high-achieving Asian students.

### Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Diversity Within AANHPI Communities:
  - The AANHPI label encompasses a wide range of cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. Counselors and admissions officers must avoid generalizations and recognize the diversity within these communities.
- Holistic Admissions & Authenticity:
  - Admissions officers emphasized the importance of holistic review, considering the whole student beyond grades and test scores. Authenticity in essays and applications is crucial—students should share personal stories, motivations, and challenges, not just achievements.
- Cultural Pressures & Family Dynamics:
  - Many AANHPI students face significant cultural and familial expectations, often centered on high achievement in STEM fields. Counselors should be sensitive to these pressures and help students navigate their own interests versus parental expectations.
- Parent & Community Engagement:
  - Early and ongoing communication with parents is vital. Hosting informal gatherings (e.g., coffee/tea with 9th-grade parents) helps demystify the admissions process and set realistic expectations. Parent communities can be sources of both support and misinformation.
- Collaboration Across Roles:
  - Building partnerships between school counselors, independent consultants, and community-based organizations enhances support for students. Sharing resources and experiences benefits both professionals and families.
- Practical Counseling Strategies:
  - Encourage students to ask questions and be themselves in the process.
  - Use supplemental essays and additional information sections to provide context about students' backgrounds and challenges.
  - Reframe questions to learn about students' home lives and support systems.
  - Recognize and address the unique pressures AANHPI students may face, including caretaking responsibilities and cultural expectations.
- Resource Sharing:
  - The panel provided a list of books, websites, and other resources to help counselors and families learn more about AANHPI experiences.

## **What College Counselors Should Be Attentive to for Upcoming Admissions Cycles**

- Promote Authenticity:
  - Guide students to reflect on their true interests and experiences, not just what they think admissions officers want to hear. Help them articulate the "why" behind their activities and academic choices.
- Contextualize Achievements:
  - Use counselor and teacher recommendations, as well as application sections, to provide context about students' socioeconomic backgrounds, family responsibilities, and any obstacles they have overcome.
- Engage Parents Early:
  - Start outreach with parents as early as 9th grade to build trust and understanding. Address common misconceptions about the admissions process, especially around holistic review and the value of non-STEM pathways.
- Address Stereotypes:
  - Be proactive in discussing and dispelling the "model minority" myth. Recognize that not all AANHPI students have the same resources or opportunities, and tailor support accordingly.
- Foster Collaboration:
  - Seek opportunities to collaborate with other counselors, independent consultants, and community organizations. Share best practices and resources to better serve students.
- Support Mental Health and Well-Being:
  - Be attentive to the mental health impacts of cultural and academic pressures. Create space for students to discuss their concerns and provide referrals to appropriate support services when needed.
- Stay Informed:
  - Continue learning about the evolving landscape of college admissions and the specific needs of AANHPI students. Utilize recommended readings and professional development opportunities.

## **Notetaker**

- Kevin Ma

# Dealing With Denial & Managing Maybe: Supporting Students as They Receive Decisions

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Melissa Abraham, PhD, MSc, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School
- Katie Gayman, Associate Director of College Counseling, Phillips Andover
- Amy Selinger, Senior Associate Director of College Counseling, Lawrence Academy
- Lauren Watson, Founder, Watson College Consulting, LLC

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Workshop Goals:
  - Demonstrate program components so you can introduce similar parent/guardian workshops in your school community.
  - Model deep listening practice.
  - Highlight emotional regulation muscles needed to encourage healthy responses from both students and their families.
  - Create a practice around supporting the emotional aspects of college admissions.
- Understanding fears in the College admission process:
  - Student fears: disappointing parents, rejection, anxiety around separating, uncertainty around ability, losing friendship, financial burdens on family
  - Parent fears: comparison with others, helplessness, have you done enough?, stress about finances, child moving away/separation, worrying about "unhappiness"
  - Counselor fears: we are "part of the problem," we are "out of touch," assumed agenda, paid experts no more, we're too busy, problems are too big
  - Recognizing these fears in ourselves and others is the first step toward creating spaces where authentic conversations can begin
- Power of Deep listening: Hit "Pause" and try not to fix it...yet
  - By resisting the urge to immediately fill silence or offer solutions, space is created for teenagers to:
    - Articulate thoughts they are still processing
    - Connect with emotions they may be avoiding
    - Feel truly seen and heard, perhaps for the first time
    - Develop their own problem-solving capabilities
- What Deep Listening Provides (get curious, stay curious):
  - A space to process complex emotions
  - Validation that their feelings matter
  - Models for healthy emotional processing
  - Tools to navigate future disappointments
- What we're really listening for:
  - Nonverbal cues (tone, body language)
  - What's not being said (the real message)
  - Underlying fears and anxieties
  - Opportunities to normalize emotional responses
- Distress Tolerance:

- Goal: React with intention versus simply react
- Children need to see parents can weather emotional pain
- Prevent engaging in behaviors you'll regret later
- Distress tolerance allows you to slow down to pause and listen
- Skills take practice
- Emotional regulation is not “staying calm”—it is being able to tolerate and manage your emotions and behaviors when you're not calm
- Key messages for parents and guardians:
  - Your role is to be an emotional container, not a problem solver.
  - College decisions are not a referendum on your parenting or child's worth.
  - Your response to outcomes models how to handle disappointments.
  - Your own anxiety can amplify your child's stress.
  - There are many paths to success; rejection often redirects to a better fit.
  - Prioritize relationships with your child and focus on your shared values.
  - Increase their self-awareness ( cloud of fears, beliefs, and emotions).
  - Internal experiences don't have to be acted on.
  - Illustrate the benefit of pausing and slowing down.
- Cognitive distortions are inaccurate thoughts that can lead to high negative emotions
  - All-or-nothing thinking: seeing things in black-and-white terms
  - Catastrophizing: exaggerating the potential negative consequences of events
  - Discounting the positive: focusing only on the negative and ignoring the positive
  - Filtering: paying attention only to negative info and ignoring positive info
  - Jumping to conclusions: making assumptions without sufficient evidence
  - Magnification and minimalization: making small problems seem bigger or vice versa
  - Personalization: seeing oneself as responsible for events not within your control
  - Should statements: setting unrealistic expectations and feeling guilty when not met
- Pitfalls of “fix it first”:
  - Invalidate emotions that are normal, missed opportunity to build skills, no new insight gained, more likely to fall into scripted response, lose the chance to strengthen relationship
  - There's a counselor instinct to share and correct info—because we are knowledge sharers! PAUSE! This is a missed opportunity to understand their feelings, what they're most scared about, and build the relationship. Pause before diving into tasks.
- Counselors can help combat cognitive distortions
  - Counselors need to first use distress tolerance and emotional regulation skills to pause, slow down, empathize, and not jump into solutions.
  - After a pause, correct inaccurate/false beliefs:
    - Meaning of denial, college admissions process, college experiences, college fit, future happiness/success, worth and value as a person
- Deep Listening Phrases for the College Process: 3-5 minutes when you see distress
  - “You seem really disappointed.”
  - “These feelings are normal.”
  - “What part feels the hardest now?”

- "We have time—there is no rush."
  - "I notice [observation. Am I right?"
- Denial/deferral: Tolerate feelings, pause and sit with uncertainty, accept lack of control
- Acceptance: ALSO a moment, a flash point, for us to respond similarly
  - Don't harness success as their worth as a human
  - Also can cause anxiety: "soon, people will see I don't belong"
  - Celebration is different from praise
- Slides:  Dealing w Denial PDF for sharing.pdf

## Notetaker

- Alyx Matchett

# Faith in Admission: Recognizing the Unique Strengths of Religious Identities

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Rebecca Chabrow, Director of College Counseling, Kohelet Yeshiva High School
- Chris La Tempa, Director of College Counseling, Moorestown Friends School
- Hamzah Henshaw, Founder/Director of Guidance, Five Before College/Al-Noor Academy
- Jordan Pasucci, Vice Dean, Director of Admissions, U Penn

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

### Christian Students

- Roughly  $\frac{5}{8}$  of U.S. teens ages 13-17 identify as Christian. Protestant is the most popular denomination (about  $\frac{1}{3}$ ); Catholic is next (about  $\frac{1}{4}$ ).
- 80% of those who identify as religious say it is at least "somewhat important," and  $\frac{1}{3}$  say "very important."

### Christian Schools

- Represent  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the nation's 34k private schools serving over 4M students
- Tend to have fewer students of color, race, socioeconomic status and religious affiliation (but can vary greatly by location and type of school)

### Christian School Trends & Considerations

- Post-pandemic—growth trend particularly amongst Protestant schools
- Catholic schools are currently below 2010 peak enrollment
- School choice movements and culture shifts plus public school funding policies continue to propel growth

### Academics

- Some have loose affiliations with church. They may be founded in the Christian tradition but there may be little curricular influence.
- Tighter affiliations may have religious studies requirements; those courses may or may not impact GPA. Mandatory religious courses may restrict students' course options in other areas. It's important to communicate that to college admission officers
- More conservative schools may have curricular influences on core subjects—like science and English.
- We see a general emphasis across Christian schools on character development and education of the "whole person."

### Extracurriculars

- Service and social justice are big pieces—Christian schools may require service hours.
- Leadership in religious activities (retreats, faith conferences, service groups, roles in church) may be one of the highest honors a student can earn in school/community context.
- May see leadership/significant contributions in polarizing activities (ex: March for Life).

### College Considerations

- They may be looking for a Catholic school to continue this tradition (this could include non-Catholic students looking to continue in the same tradition)

- Others may intentionally seek out something different
- Colleges need to show how faith experiences are lived on a day-to-day basis among students to ensure correct fit.

#### Jewish Students

- Represent 2.4% of the U.S. population—largest religious minority.
- Jews are not a monolith. Younger Jews are more racially and ethnically diverse. Most Jews are Democratic (71%) but Orthodox Jews (75%) tend to be Republican.
- 3 things to emphasize
  - Vast majority of Jews don't consider themselves very religious, but Judaism culturally might still be very important. It can be a central part of their identity even if they're not necessarily practicing.
  - Place high value on education. Majority of Jews go to college, 30% have post-grad degrees. Half of the Jewish population lives comfortably.
  - Generational trauma—most Jewish families came to us with nothing through pogroms or Holocaust. They have relied historically on education for upward mobility.
  - Liberal education is analogous to Jewish concept of "torah lishmah," study for its own sake.

#### Jewish School Trends & Considerations

- Only 20% of Jewish school-aged children attend Jewish Day School. Participation in Hebrew school can impact extracurriculars (for students who don't attend JDS).
- For kids who attend JDS, commutes can be long, and this can impact their studies and extracurricular involvement.
- Orthodox schools generally have a longer day, with 2 services a day plus additional Jewish studies classes.
- Both have dual curriculum—5 core subjects + Jewish studies curriculum. At an Orthodox school, students could take up to 4 Jewish studies classes on top of core subjects.
- Jewish studies classes: values, ethics, textual study, translation, analysis & application

#### Jewish Extracurriculars:

- Note: Orthodox students don't have as much time.
- Youth groups are popular.
- Tikkun Olam—social justice—is a big value.
- Zionist groups are a big part of Jewish culture.
- Camp can be a central part of American Jewish identity. For non-JDS students, this can be their first time in a 24/7 immersive Jewish experience. We will see students going to sleepaway camp into freshman/sophomore year of high school and returning as counselors or CITs.

#### College Considerations

- Are there Jewish organizations on campus? Kosher dining? Missing class/exams for holidays?
- Safety of Jewish students/climate on campus toward Israel.
- Common Application essay topics: Tikkun Olam ("repair the world"), religious practice, family history/legacy, transferable skills from Jewish studies, interfaith dialogue, Israel advocacy and experiences
  - When writing about Israel, avoid: explaining the conflict, simplistic OR extreme beliefs, arguing political positions, criticizing Palestinians and their activists

#### Muslim Students

- 4 million Muslims in the U.S. represent 1.3% of the population.
- Muslims are the most diverse faith community in the U.S. (not just Arabs).
- 58% of Muslims living in the U.S. are first-generation—they are navigating this system for the first time. Even if their parents are quite accomplished, they may not have gone to college in this country or have a good understanding of the process.

#### Muslim School Trends & Considerations

- 90% of Muslim students are in mainstream American public schools.
- Only about 4% attend Islamic schools. Homeschooling is also a popular option in the Muslim community.
- Medicine, law engineering—prioritize higher education with strong emphasis on prestigious careers.
- Transferable skills—fasting during Ramadan (discipline, spiritual commitment), social justice as essential to Muslim identity.
- 43% attend mosque weekly, 42% pray five times daily. Prayer can be tricky for students in public schools.

#### Muslim Extracurriculars

- Academic competitions
- Faith-based activities
- MIST tournament
- Memorization of Koran in another language

#### College Considerations

- Islamophobia, discrimination, halal food—these factors are not peripheral concerns; they are central to enrollment and retention of Muslim families. Things like halal dining options, designated prayer space, and safe and inclusive housing (substance free, single gender) are essential.
- Common essay topics—faith, fasting, hijab, Quran memorization, Palestinian heritage, stories of resilience and discrimination
  - Best essays link Islamic values to personal journey and authentic growth—not theology lessons.

#### Should students write about faith?

- You have to be who you are. You can't water yourself down and then get there and be confused about why it's not working.
- What is it I'm trying to get someone to know about me? It's not usually an ideology or perspective on a controversial issue. What it is is the way they approach interactions, community, learning, dialogue. If they can do that well, there's no topic that's out of range.

## Notetaker

Mary Beth Foster

# Friday, Sept. 19

## International Secondary Students in the U.S. SIG

### Session Overview

The seminar convened international admissions professionals, college counselors, and program directors to discuss the evolving landscape of international education. The focus was on the responsible use of AI in college admissions, current trends in international student mobility, and the impact of recent policy changes in the U.S. and Canada. The session included data presentations, panel discussions, and Q&A, offering both strategic insights and practical advice.

### Session Notes & Key Takeaways

1. Trends in International Student Admissions:
  - Stable International Enrollment:
    - Pre-college programs have maintained a stable international student enrollment rate of about 9% over the past three years, despite global uncertainties.
    - The majority of students in these programs are domestic (U.S.-based), but international participation remains significant.
    - Brazil was highlighted as an outlier, showing consistent growth in international student numbers.
  - Top Destinations:
    - Columbia University and University of Miami are the most popular U.S. destinations for international students in these pre-college programs.
    - Duke University is the top choice for international students interested in medicine, business, and engineering.
    - 90% of international program destinations (including Oxford and Canadian locations) also have U.S. students enrolled, indicating strong cross-border interest.
  - Canadian Trends:
    - Canada saw a steady increase in international study permit holders from 2015 until 2020, a dip in 2020 (likely due to the pandemic), and resumed growth until a recent government cap was introduced.
    - The cap was implemented to address concerns about “bad actors” (institutions not providing quality education) and is expected to reduce the number of new international students this year.
    - Canadian universities are mostly public, offering a standardized level of education and a variety of campus sizes and program types.
  - U.S. Trends:
    - U.S. undergraduate admissions for international students remain strong, but students are increasingly applying to multiple countries to manage risk from policy changes.
    - Graduate admissions are more volatile, with some students choosing to delay entry due to uncertainty.
2. The Role of AI in Admissions:

- Responsible Use:
    - AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly) are widely used by students for essay writing, research, and planning.
    - Panelists emphasized that while AI can be helpful for editing and brainstorming, it should not replace a student's authentic voice or be used to generate entire essays.
    - Students should be taught to use AI as a supplement, not a substitute, and to always check institutional policies regarding AI use.
  - Privacy Concerns:
    - Students must avoid inputting personal or sensitive information (e.g., names, addresses, school details) into AI tools, as this data can be stored or misused.
    - Counselors should educate students and families about digital privacy and the risks of sharing identifiable information online.
  - Institutional Policies:
    - Many universities are still developing their policies on AI use in applications. Counselors should encourage students to check each institution's guidelines and err on the side of caution.
3. Scholarships and Financial Aid:
- Limited Availability:
    - Scholarships for international students exist but are generally more limited than those for domestic students, especially in Canada.
    - Most Canadian financial aid is reserved for citizens or permanent residents, though some merit-based scholarships are available to international applicants.
    - Rising tuition and living costs are a significant concern for international students and their families.
  - Transparency:
    - Counselors should be upfront with students about the true cost of attendance and the competitive nature of scholarship opportunities.
4. Student Mobility and Program Preferences:
- Multiple Applications:
    - Students are increasingly applying to several countries and institutions to maximize their chances and manage uncertainty.
    - There is a growing trend of U.S. students considering international destinations, and vice versa.
  - Experiential Learning:
    - Canadian institutions are particularly attractive due to the availability of paid internships, co-op programs, and post-graduate work permits (up to three years after graduation).
    - These opportunities are highly valued by international students seeking practical experience and pathways to employment.
  - Changing Narratives:
    - In the U.S., there is a need for counselors to advocate for the value of a U.S. education, as public narratives around international students and policy changes can be negative or confusing.
5. Panelist Insights and Anecdotes:
- Industry Connections:

- One panelist shared that the best way to stay current with AI and tech trends is to connect with professionals in the industry, as academia often lags behind.
    - Building a network of industry contacts can help students and counselors stay informed about in-demand skills and resources.
  - Parental Concerns:
    - Counselors are increasingly fielding questions from parents about the responsible use of AI and the potential risks for students.
    - It is important to communicate clearly with families, address their concerns, and provide guidance on best practices.

### **Recommendations for College Counselors**

- Stay Informed:
  - Regularly monitor policy changes in both the U.S. and Canada, especially regarding study permits, work opportunities, and institutional requirements.
  - Attend professional conferences and network with colleagues to share updates and strategies.
- Educate on AI and Digital Literacy:
  - Teach students how to use AI tools ethically, emphasizing privacy, authenticity, and compliance with institutional policies.
  - Provide workshops or resources on digital safety and responsible technology use.
- Advise on Application Strategies:
  - Encourage students to diversify their applications across multiple countries and institutions.
  - Help students research and understand the specific requirements and opportunities at each destination.
- Clarify Financial Realities:
  - Be transparent about the limited availability of scholarships and the full cost of attendance.
  - Guide students in budgeting and seeking alternative funding sources.
- Highlight Experiential and Post-Graduate Opportunities:
  - Inform students about the value of internships, co-ops, and post-graduate work permits, especially in Canada.
  - Encourage students to consider programs that offer practical experience and clear pathways to employment.
- Communicate Effectively with Families:
  - Address parental concerns about AI, admissions policies, and student safety.
  - Provide clear, current, and actionable information to help families make informed decisions.
- Build Professional Networks:
  - Connect with industry professionals and higher education colleagues to stay ahead of trends and provide students with up-to-date advice.

### **Notetaker**

- Kevin Ma

# Storytelling in College Admissions: Supporting Students in Essay Writing

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Brennan Barnard, College Counseling Advisor (Khan Lab School), College Admission Advisor (Making Caring Common), Director of College Counseling (College Guidance Network & Forest School)
- LaToya Battle-Brown, Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management, Rutgers University—Newark
- Shereem Herndon-Brown, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Strategic Admissions Advice
- Susan Kastner-Tree, College Counselor, Consultant, Writer (College Essay Guy), Podcast Host (Your College Bound Kid), Admissions (Bates College, Reader U Rochester, Bucknell University)

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

Why does storytelling matter? What do we tell students about why their story is important?

- Essays show the person behind the numbers
- They highlight resilience, growth, values and goals
- They bring authenticity to the application

Note: There's a lot of anxiety around this process, thinking they are "not enough." They want to tell something grand, something tragic. But ask: How many of your classmates have the same grades? Scored approximately the same on the SAT? Participate in sports? So this group of people, and you're all applying to the same school—how are you going to stand out in this process? The only way you are going to stand out in this process is with your story.

No matter what story you *think* an admissions person wants to hear—they want to hear your authentic voice, see your authentic self.

- Authentic voice and self-reflection
- Evidence of growth or learning
- Contribution to campus community
- Clarity over perfection

### Myth vs. Truth

- Myth: Must be a tragic story
  - Truth: Any story can be powerful
- Myth: Big words make you sound smarter
  - Truth: clarity matters more than complexity
- Myth: There is a "right answer" to the essay
  - Truth: The essay should be unique to the writer and their experience.

Change the paradigm: application as representation as opposed to resume

- Students tend to bring a “resume” understanding to the application: you are what you've done. Application is evidence of “past you” (achievements, accomplishments)
- Think of the application as a jigsaw puzzle: the student is the puzzle master, the curator, the dramaturg, the chemist, the imagineer—they are the designer responsible for the pieces that come together to represent them with clarity and coherence.

So how do we help?

- Danger of “best essays” as a teaching tool—danger of essays that “worked”—they're going to copy these and lose any shred of individuality and voice.
- Use “This I believe...” (NPR) instead.
- Use essays that come from all sorts of sources—NOT just college admissions. Ideas: New Yorker, The Atlantic, The Moth Radio Hour.

Good essays engage, not entertain the reader. It's not an essay contest.

There are no bad topics, just bad essays. Those essays about Costco—the person who wrote that is 1 of 1. It's amazing. But it can't be replicated.

Essay Review

- Encourage students to give guardrails when requesting feedback
- How much is too much? What are you asking for? Don't just send the essay and ask for thoughts. Articulate—this is what I'm looking for from you, reader.
- Play it positive—it's powerful for them to hear what in their writing resonates with other people, what others are appreciating
- Cull the crowd—10 people commenting on a document is too many. They quickly lose their voice when too many others are involved.

More Essay Feedback Strategies

- “Drop Test”—if you turned in your essay and your teacher dropped it and all the names fell off, would that teacher be able to pick it up and know whose it was?
- “Stranger Strategy”—take a strong draft and give it to parents and ask them to give it to someone who doesn't know them. Have that person read it and in 1-2 sentences, describe the student.
  - AI can democratize access to support in this process. If you don't have someone to give it to, prompt AI: “You are an admissions expert. Scan this draft of an essay and give me three adjectives that describe me. In two sentences, what did you learn about me?”
- “Say in a Sentence”—What's your favorite sentence? Start again from there.
- “Give it Voice”—Read aloud. They hear it in a different way. Record it and play it back.

Proofread, don't polish. Don't lose your student's voice.

Questions:

- Coaching/teaching authenticity can be really difficult. Students can be navigating their education in a very transactional way; this may be the first time they're thinking about who they are and who they want to be. How do you counsel this student?
  - That's when it can be particularly dangerous for students to read “good” essays and mimic them. We need to find ways to get them out of the transactional mindset.

- No one ever got into college JUST because of their essay—they contribute to the assessment.
- Essays that are disconnected from other parts of the application (tone, content) aren't influential. They don't contribute something that helps tie the pieces together.

## **Notetaker**

- Mary Beth Foster

# The Economics of Fraud

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Terry Crawford, CEO
- Chris Moses, Foreign Principal, Shanghai Hongrun Boyuan School
- Frances Nan Zhang, Senior Vice Principal & Dean of College Counseling & Financial Aid, WLSA Shanghai Academy
- Shane McGuire, Senior Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Vanderbilt University

## Session Overview

The seminar focused on the growing issue of academic fraud in college admissions, with a particular emphasis on international applicants, especially from China. Panelists discussed the various forms of fraud, the pressures driving students and families to engage in dishonest practices, and the challenges institutions face in detecting and preventing fraud. The conversation also addressed the broader context of global competition, the role of rankings and prestige, and the need for culturally sensitive admissions processes.

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- **Fraud Mechanisms:** Fraud is often facilitated through euphemistic online services, general-purpose websites (like eBay), and social media platforms (e.g., WeChat). Services include test-taking, grade manipulation, and document forgery, with costs varying widely.
- **Pressure and Incentives:** Students and families face immense pressure due to hyper-selective admissions, misinformation, and the perceived necessity of attending elite institutions. Schools and agents may also have financial incentives to inflate results or facilitate fraud.
- **Cultural and Systemic Factors:** The admissions process in the U.S. often relies on documents (transcripts, recommendations) that may not hold the same meaning or integrity in other educational cultures. There is a disconnect between U.S. expectations and international realities.
- **Red Flags and Detection:** Inconsistencies between application materials (e.g., essays vs. interviews, recommendations with similar language), suspicious school websites, and unusual application patterns are potential indicators of fraud.
- **Institutional Responsibility:** Colleges must balance the need for revenue and diversity with the integrity of their admissions processes. There is a call for more culturally aligned and robust systems to detect and address fraud.
- **Collaboration and Communication:** Building relationships with trusted colleagues, both domestically and internationally, is crucial for sharing information and best practices.

## Recommendations for College Counselors:

1. **Raise Awareness:** Regularly discuss the prevalence and forms of admissions fraud with your team. Ensure everyone is aware of potential red flags and the latest trends.
2. **Develop Triage Systems:** Implement processes to flag and review suspicious applications, including second or third reviews for files that raise concerns.

3. **Due Diligence:** Cross-check application materials for consistency, verify school profiles and websites, and be alert to unusual patterns or language in recommendations.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Recognize that international documents may not always align with U.S. standards. Advocate for admissions processes that are more culturally responsive and less reliant on easily manipulated metrics.
5. **Build Networks:** Reach out to colleagues at other schools and colleges to share information about emerging trends and best practices in fraud detection.
6. **Educate Families:** Help students and parents understand the risks and consequences of fraud, and promote the value of honesty and fit over prestige.
7. **Support Students:** Acknowledge the pressures students face and provide resources and encouragement to help them navigate the process ethically.

### Detailed Types of Fraud and Structures/Approaches Used

1. Test-Taking Fraud
  - **Online Marketplaces:** Fraudulent services are often advertised on general-purpose websites (e.g., eBay), not just on specialized cheating sites. These listings may use euphemistic language to avoid detection.
  - **WeChat and Off-Platform Communication:** After initial contact on a public site, communication quickly moves to private channels like WeChat, where details are arranged.
  - **In-Person and At-Home Cheating:**
    - For in-person tests, imposters may show up with fake IDs to take exams for students.
    - For at-home/online tests, elaborate setups are used: a phone is positioned to show the test-taker, while another device is used to receive answers in real time from a third party. The test-taker may practice with the service provider to ensure the scheme works smoothly.
  - **Pricing Structure:** The cost of these services can depend on the desired test score, with higher scores commanding higher prices. Payment may be split between an upfront fee and a balance paid after results are delivered.
2. Transcript and Grade Manipulation
  - **Grade Redoing:** Agents or schools may offer to "redo" poor grades from earlier years, essentially erasing academic history and replacing it with better results. This can be arranged by transferring to a new school that is willing to issue a new transcript.
  - **Inflated Grades:** There is a market for inflating grades on transcripts, with costs ranging from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the level of manipulation and the prestige of the school.
  - **Institutional Complicity:** Some schools, especially those under financial pressure, may be willing to issue altered or entirely fabricated transcripts to retain students or attract new ones.
3. Document Forgery and Recommendation Letters
  - **Forged Recommendations:** Students may write their own recommendation letters and have teachers or counselors sign them, especially when language barriers exist.

- **Template Reuse:** Multiple recommendations may use nearly identical language or formatting, sometimes with only minor variations, indicating they were not independently written.
  - **Fake School Profiles:** Some fraudulent applications are accompanied by school profiles or websites that use stock photos or contain other signs of inauthenticity.
4. Strategic Application Manipulation
- **Orchestrated Applications:** In some cities, elite schools may coordinate which students apply to which top universities to maximize the number of acceptances and maintain their reputations.
  - **Application Padding:** Students may exaggerate or fabricate extracurricular activities and achievements, sometimes with the help of agents or counselors.
5. Cultural and Systemic Factors
- **Misalignment of Expectations:** The U.S. admissions system relies heavily on documents (transcripts, recommendations) that may not have the same meaning or integrity in other countries, making it easier for fraudulent documents to go undetected.
  - **Pressure from Rankings and Prestige:** The drive to gain admission to highly ranked institutions fuels demand for fraudulent services, as families and schools seek to secure prestigious outcomes at any cost.

## Notetaker

- Kevin Ma

# Evolving Your 2025 AI Toolkit for College Admissions

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Coral Azarian, Co-Director of College Counseling, Rowland Hall
- Ben Neely, Chief Academic Innovation Officer, Revolution Prep
- Chris Rodriguez, Associate Director of College Counseling, The Lovett School
- Ben Toll, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, The George Washington University

## Session Overview

This seminar explored the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence (AI) in college admissions and higher education. Presenters discussed the increasing adoption of AI tools by colleges and universities, the challenges and opportunities these technologies present, and the implications for students, counselors, and institutions. The session included data from recent surveys, real-world case studies, and a panel discussion on best practices and ethical considerations.

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

1. Rapid AI Adoption in Admissions:
  - The use of AI in enrollment management and admissions has grown dramatically, with 65% of surveyed institutions reporting adoption by late 2024, up from 40% the previous year.
  - There is a proliferation of vendors offering AI-powered solutions for every stage of the admissions funnel.
2. Transparency and Policy Gaps:
  - Only 22% of colleges have a cohesive, university-wide AI strategy.
  - Many institutions lack clear communication about how AI is used in admissions, leading to confusion and mistrust among students and counselors.
3. Student and Counselor Concerns:
  - 40% of surveyed students expressed worry about AI being used in their application evaluations.
  - Counselors are not confident that colleges are using AI ethically, with many expressing neutrality or uncertainty.
4. Case Studies—Virginia Tech & UNC:
  - Virginia Tech publicly disclosed its use of an AI reader alongside a human reader for application review, with clear protocols for discrepancies.
  - UNC was found to have used AI in essay evaluation without prior disclosure, later issuing a vague public statement. This raised concerns about fairness, especially for non-native English speakers.
5. Ethical and Practical Challenges:
  - There is tension between prohibiting students from using AI in their essays while institutions use AI to evaluate them.
  - Students worry about how AI judges writing style and grammar, and whether they need to use certain “buzzwords” to pass AI filters.
6. Student Use of AI Tools:

- A significant and growing number of students use AI for college research and essay writing.
  - Half of college counselors now use AI tools weekly or daily.
7. Recommendations for Institutions:
- Ensure robust bias checks and transparency in AI tools.
  - Develop clear policies and communication strategies.
  - Provide workshops to help students retain their own voice and critical thinking skills.

### What College Counselors Should Be Attentive to for Upcoming Admissions Cycles:

- **Resource link:**  
<https://tutoring.revolutionprep.com/ai-toolkit-for-college-counselors>
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up with which colleges are using AI in admissions and how they communicate this to applicants.
- **Advocate for Transparency:** Encourage institutions to clearly disclose their use of AI and the criteria used in evaluation.
- **Support Student Voice:** Help students understand how to maintain authenticity in their applications, even as AI becomes more prevalent.
- **Educate on AI Use:** Guide students on ethical and effective use of AI tools for research and application preparation.
- **Monitor for Bias:** Be vigilant about potential biases in AI evaluation, especially for students from diverse backgrounds or with nontraditional writing styles.
- **Prepare for Change:** Expect continued rapid evolution in AI tools and policies; be ready to adapt counseling practices accordingly.
- **Leverage Resources:** Utilize professional groups and resources (e.g., EdHub.ai, AI in College Admissions SIG) to stay current and share best practices.

### Notetaker

- Kevin Ma

# Testing Policies in Trying Times

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Akil Bello, Director of College Advising and FAFSA Completion Implementation, SUNY
- Stephen Burd, Senior Writer & Editor, Higher Education, New America
- Harry Feder, Executive Director, FairTest

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Insights from ACT: They admitted from their data that the science is something they're marketing to kids, but that colleges don't really need it.
- If you've gutted your research staff, and/or you were so crushed financially that you were bought out by private equity, there's less investment in making tests equitably scalable.
- 4 wrong answers can swing a score now by multiple points, which is way more than it used to be.
- On the June 2018 SAT, wrong answers caused students to drop by 30 points (way more than average).
- The PSAT from last fall did not produce the spread of scores that there should have.
- Shows that 1550s some dates are truly harder to get than other dates.
- Case Study: Tufts University
  - Sincere in their attempts to cite policies that do right by students
  - Show the minimum scores that are helpful in their review, which are well below their middle 50%
  - Addresses "miswithholding" (conservative approaches to submitting scores because they fear being on the low end of averages will hurt them)
  - But if you look at who they take, only 1.28% who are below their score ranges are admitted
- Caltech
  - I consulted with them a few years ago and encouraged them to go test free
  - But then they changed their mind.
  - Their attempt with the bucket system is to debunk the idea that if you don't have a perfect score, you shouldn't apply.
  - Your exact score is not shown if you have above a 750 on each section...meant to stop students from obsessing of retaking multiple times to get to a perfect score.
- Illinois puts reports of scores and how they vary from different colleges and programs.
- Question about AP scores: Adam says they're more predictive than SAT or ACT and are more like leaving exams internationally...and that places like UC Berkeley use them. Says "you're onto something."

## Notetaker

- Tom Campbell

# Managing Helicopter & Snowplow Parents in the College Admissions Process

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Niki Mendrinis, Director of School and College Counseling, Bishop Eustace Preparatory School
- Jeremy Branch, Associate Director of College Counseling, The Haverford School
- Stacey Cunitz, Certified Educational Planner, Blue Moon Educational Consulting
- Chris Hoffman, Northeast Recruitment Coordinator/Freshman Admissions Counselor, University of Minnesota

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

What's your definition of each?

- Helicopter—hovers over every decision, often controlling the process.
  - Makes decisions for the student, interferes in the child's life ( I want to take choir! No you're not—you'll take business.)
  - Worries excessively, overadvises.
  - They want to control the list of colleges and the process.
- Snowplow—removes obstacles, preventing students from facing challenges
  - Communicates in place of the student
  - Intervenes to prevent failure, disappointment or discomfort
  - Prioritizes outcomes over growth

Understanding the Why

- Social pressure—everyone has an opinion on college (this happens in all communities, not just the well-off). These echo chambers in our society exist more than ever before.
- Parents attach their OWN self-worth to their kids' outcomes. How do my son or daughter's outcomes reflect on ME? Fear (of failure).
- Let's be fair—these parents in 2025 are facing greater pressures than our own did!

Impact on Students

- Reduced independence, resilience, lack of self-advocacy
- Poor coping and decision-making skills
- Increased anxiety and stress
- Reduced confidence to navigate setbacks on their own
- Become overly reliant on their parent
- Some students may feel entitled to success without effort, while others feel immense pressure to live up to the expectations created by their parents' involvement

Strategies for Managing Parental Involvement

- Reframe bad behavior—recognize that bad behavior comes from love, anxiety and a desire to “get it right”
  - Recognize we're all like this sometimes.
  - Recognize that some parents chose an independent school because they want that control. We have to be careful not to match this energy. We can't carry everything from them.
  - Remember your professionalism isn't being attacked.

- De-escalate: "I understand the pressure you're under. I didn't experience anything like this. Can you help me understand your anxiety, and we'll start from there."
- Set clear boundaries—define roles for students, parents and counselors
  - Example: limit communication (we'll talk on Thursdays)
  - What I need you to do is... Keep an eye on...
  - Clearly define each person's responsibilities for making forward progress. Each of us has a role and is doing something.
- Encourage student ownership—guide students to take responsibility for applications
  - Sometimes it's not just what you say but how you say it (interview process)
  - Lead with empathy—remember how old they are and the things they're going through.
  - Hold students accountable with checklists.
  - Sometimes school communities can make this difficult. Sometimes leadership is part of the challenge! When parents go above you for holding students accountable, sometimes we feel a different type of pressure. Sometimes the school community doesn't necessarily let us hold students accountable. We may be the first place to tell this family no. It's hard when we don't have buy-in from the people above us.

## **Notetaker**

- Mary Beth Foster

# Supporting Marginalized Youth With Postsecondary Access

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Priscilla A. Grijalva, School Counselor at San Jacinto Leadership Academy (CA)
- Dr. Jennifer Kirk, School Counselor, Upper St. Clair High School

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Who do you think of when identifying marginalized youth in your school setting?
  - Consider federal & state legislation, district policies, ASCA & NACAC Ethical Standards, and ASCA Position Statements
    - Ex. Being aware of TRIO cuts & FAFSA changes
- Consider gaps in college readiness
  - More communication with students, parents, and staff on the college entrance + graduation requirements
  - Teachers have expressed the students did not know the A-G college prep requirements
  - Parents stated they were not aware their student could make up D's in summer school
  - Parents also stated they did not know college entrance requirements
  - Special Education Case Managers report students sometimes do not understand what a D or F grade does to their GPA and the importance of doing well in school
- Slides below show information Tier 1 programming (MTSS framework) for 9th-12th grade including focus areas + activities for each grade
- Emphasize value in ALL pathways, not just 4-year college
- Collaboration in the school building
  - Share counseling updates in staff meetings
  - Send monthly newsletters to staff and families
  - Ask students for input through surveys & conversations
  - Co-teach classroom lessons on careers and financial aid
  - Promote all postsecondary pathways equally
  - Involve students in planning and leading events
  - Integrate SEL and future planning into class activities
  - Partner with teachers for cross-curricular collaboration
  - Collaborate with military, CBOs, and postsecondary partners
- Slides:  NACAC 2025 - Supporting Marginalized Youth with Postsecondary Acces...

## Notetaker

- Alyx Matchett

# Engage & Uplift: Strength-Based Strategies for Student Reflection in the College Process

## Presenter's Name and Organization

- Carolyn Siegel, Associate Director of College Counseling and Academic Advising, Pinewood School

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- [The Five W's](#)
  - This activity is for when you've landed on an idea you like for your Common App personal statement and want to explore how it reflects who you are now (and perhaps the person you're working toward becoming!).
  - Two versions: Productive Pair Work and Alternative AI Pathway.
- [Low-Key Leading: A Self-Reflection Guide for Recognizing Your Leadership](#)
  - You don't need a title to be a leader! Many students lead through everyday actions—by showing resilience, making an impact, and using their voice in their families, schools, and communities. This worksheet will help you recognize those moments and the leadership skills you've built through lived experience.

## Notetaker

- Mary Beth Foster

# Forging Partnerships: Helping Students Experiencing Homelessness Transition to College

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Danielle Rains, School Counselor/Homeless Liaison, Cincinnati Public Schools
- Elizabeth Shipman, School Counselor/Homeless Liaison, Cincinnati Public Schools

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Definitions of homelessness are different in K-12 schools
  - McKinney-Vento Act—Lack of a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence
    - Includes doubled-up & couch surfing
    - Youth homelessness is fluid
    - More broad than the government definition—includes running away, being kicked out (unaccompanied) and immigrants
  - Housing and Urban Development (HUD)—exclusive to those living outside, in cars/van, hotel/motel, or in shelters
    - Does not include shared housing
- McKinney-Vento Liaison Role in K-12
  - Identify students experiencing homelessness
  - Inform students and parents of their rights
  - Reduce barriers to school attendance and engagement
  - Train school staff annually
- McKinney-Vento Liaison Role Transition to College
  - Under MKV, liaisons are required to inform unaccompanied homeless youth of their status of an independent student on the FAFSA and provide verification documentation
  - Homeless youth must receive assistance from school counselors to advise, prepare, and improve their college readiness.
- Homelessness in Higher Education Facts
  - National HS Graduation rate of students experiencing homelessness is 68%.
  - Youth experiencing homelessness are less than a third as likely to be enrolled in a 4-year college as stably-housed peers.
  - According to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), 9% of 4-year university students, 12% of community college students, and 5% of graduate students experience homelessness.
  - Homeless and foster youth experience challenges to pursuing college, such as burdensome FAFSA documentation, limited family support, and lack of awareness of available financial resources.
  - Higher education is a protective factor against youth adult homelessness and can break the cycle of adult and family homelessness.
- Assisting with the FAFSA
  - FAFSA does not ask about family homelessness.
  - FAFSA does ask about Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and will automatically determine independent status and does not require parent information.
- Slides:  NACAC 9\_2025 Presentation (1).pptx

## **Notetaker**

- Alyx Matchett

# Talking about Race in College Essays: Practical Guidance for 2025

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Ethan Sawyer, Founder, College Essay Guy
- Ralph Figueroa, Dean of College Guidance, Albuquerque Academy
- Baron Vanderburg, Senior Regional Admissions Counselor for Pennsylvania, George Mason University

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

### Ralph

- Colleges bear the burden. Students need to be who they are. You can and should tell your story in the application process exactly as you want to be represented.
- Current legal landscape
  - Colleges bear the burden
  - Chaos is the objective
  - Do not pre-comply—anti-DEI policy views are not federal law

### Baron

- Short answer = yes, write about race. Longer answer = yes, if they want to, if it's an important part of their identity that they want the college to focus on.
- Admissions officers are not only building an academic community but also a social one. We should be bringing different groups of people together to create a diverse and rich learning experience.
  - Experiences based on racial identity are key in community building. Sometimes we have different cultural norms based on our upbringings.
  - Even Liberty University has a Black Student Union.
  - Holistic approach
    - Relies on learning all parts of a student
    - Cultural experiences are a part of holistic recruitment—how your background and upbringing have affected you personally.
  - “Can’t ask, do tell”—AOs “can’t ask” you to write about your racial identity, but you are welcome to tell us
  - Identity vs. grit
    - So many admissions professionals push students to “show grit” in the admissions process.
    - People who have had to experience grit don’t need a regular reminder—it isn’t mentally healthy to tell a student whose parent passed away when they were 9 to write about that if that is something they don’t highlight or make paramount in their identity. It’s not morally correct to make someone who has gone through the throes of poverty make them write about it if they don’t think that’s paramount.
    - Redirect to identity, place more focus on life effects over life experiences—more of life experience and less on “grit.” redirect from “this is what happened” to “this is my life as a result.” Not a reminisce on grit.

## Ethan

- What are colleges signaling in supplemental essay prompts?
  - Of 75 most-often Googled colleges & universities
    - Average college requires 2.5 supp essays
    - A few schools (Stanford, MIT, Caltech) required 8+
    - $\frac{1}{3}$  only require one (American, Brandeis, Boulder)
  - Most popular prompt = identity/what will you bring to our campus.
  - Runner up = Why Major?  $\frac{1}{3}$ —care about major fit
- Students CAN discuss race, but it will be especially helpful to a reader if you can do so to share skills, values, and identities.
- 3 questions to ask the student and ourselves?
  - Does the story center the students' power and agency or mostly their pain? (empowerment over victimization)
  - Am I honoring the student's boundaries, or nudging them toward a story because I think it will "work"?
  - Have we made space for joy, resilience, or identity beyond hardship in this essay? (FGLI students are more than their struggles—reflects balance)
- Our job is to equip students with the information they need to make an informed decision.

## Notetaker

- Mary Beth Foster

# The Plight of the Standard Strong Applicant

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Susan Kastner Tree, College Counselor, Consultant, Writer, Podcast Co-Host, College Essay Guy
- Bruce Hunter, Itinerant College Counselor, Consultant
- Tahirah Jordan Crawford, Director of Multicultural Recruitment, Columbia University

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

What are our students facing?

- An extremely competitive global applicant pool—schools with < 5-10% acceptance rates.
- It's important (for parents) to look at this moment in time—not what you experienced 20 years ago or what your neighbor's son went through 4 or 5 years ago.
- A feeling of "premature completion"—the "Yeah, I've done it." You are not done because you filled something out/met a word count. Premature completion can be the death of a student in a competitive applicant pool.

"I've done all the right things, great grades, testing lots of activities and more"—you have gotten caught up in things that you believe make a difference. But it's distinct minute things that help elevate your candidacy in this pool.

- The importance of supplemental essays cannot be overstated (per Columbia rep).
  - You cannot copy/paste for highly selective schools.
  - Applying to 15-20 selective schools is impossible. You're not doing your due diligence in selecting them or crafting applications.
  - You can't get in by following the Reddit or TikTok formula. We can see who put authentic time, deliberation and thought into their essays.
- Counselors have to honestly evaluate a student's profile. Where a particular student lands will differ from school to school. Everyone's "strong standard application pool" is different—you have to do your due diligence in matching school/profile.
- The waitlist approach is different from the application approach. At this stage, you are putting the icing on top. A class has been made.

What can we do to help our students?

- The application is not a resume.
  - We have a thorough activity section to see what you've done.
  - Accomplishments are not as important as impact.
- Guide them in self-exploration.
  - You have to KNOW YOURSELF in this process. There is no way a student who is academically superb is a great fit for every Ivy League institution.
    - You have to know yourself to answer supplemental questions.
    - You have to know yourself to appreciate what a campus can and can't offer you.
  - Many students/families are chasing names, brands, what they believe is the right place. Students aren't identifying what will truly be the best place for them in their post-secondary journey.
- Encourage strategic writing—use supplements + college essays to show different sides of themselves. You have to match yourself to the institutions.

“Standard Strong” describes many hoping to move from competitive to compelling to convincing. But who or what is “truly convincing?”

- There isn't a clear and easy explanation for what makes a student convincing or “why I wasn't admitted.”
- Sometimes it's just that they deny 96% of students who apply who are all magnificent.
- Where can students distinguish themselves?
  - Supplements now rival essays. Many ask college/university specifics, reflect institutions history, values, cultures, and priorities. Responses must be personal, nongeneric, and thoughtful.
  - If you can't come up with anything for a “Why us?”...maybe you shouldn't be applying there!
  - Students are often trying to make a case for how they might impact the institution to which they're applying through supplements.
- Urge students to start supplements early.
  - Don't “parrot back” and name/place drop—in other words, use facts, figures, and qualities that cover the institution but say nothing about the student and why they're drawn there.
  - Instead, ask: What is in the institutional DNA that's highest on my list?
    - Focus on you: your impact/ideas, not on what C/U offers (from Clemson honors prompt)
- Overall: students and parents overestimate their chances for admission on factors NOT related to impact.

More practical approaches

- Counselors can get sucked into the vortex of student achievements and wonderfulness. We support them in bringing that in. But we need to get away from the mentality that the application is a giant resume.
  - A resume is a fixed, past-tense document.
  - We need to help kids shift the paradigm—application as representation not resume.
  - A representation is colorful, dynamic, messy, and imperfect. Hiding imperfections leads to a killing of spirit in an application.
- Students should be curators/designers/imagineers of applications, not accountants.
- It's also not the student's job to entertain—it's their job to engage.
- Think about vocabulary we use that kids may misunderstand. We use words like compelling, critical thinking, leadership, community building, risk taking—what do those really mean?
  - Make them comfortable asking college reps to define those terms. Can you unpack that for me? What makes an application compelling? What does it mean when you hear my voice in that application? How can I better understand how to share that part of myself with you?
- Talk with them honestly about perfectionism. Struggles can define us throughout our lives. The greatest scientific discoveries were rooted in lack of success + curiosity.
- Ask reps things like...
  - What can advance a well-qualified applicant who does not have a hook?

- How context impacts the evaluation of an application
- How evaluation rubrics are developed
- Qualities of impactful writing
- Where/how do you see truth to power in an application
- Who's in the bottom 25%—i.e., who made it in under the wire? What makes the difference?

# Where are the Lines? New Trends in Counseling Visual and Performing Artists

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Rebecca Kandel, Director of College Counseling, Idyllwind Arts Academy
- Ryan Duncan, Head of International Recruitment & Marketing, The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA)

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- "Arts-based career professionals report higher overall job satisfaction than their non-artistic counterparts, largely due to a strong sense of autonomy, independence, and the personal fulfillment they derive from creative work."—Strategic National Arts Alumni Project Special Report, 2024
- Neighborhood test vs. Industry test—Google searches and "neighbors" not in the field may suggest colleges that they've heard are good, but those are often only graduate-level programs, and opportunities will be competitive.
- Counseling tip: get to know the student as an artist, not just a category of visual or performing.
- BFA vs. BA
  - What are you doing in your electives? With a BA, the electives are outside the arts, and with a BFA, they are consistently arts focused or there are no electives altogether.
  - How much academic rigor are you looking for? What type of industry training?
  - Reassure parents that a BFA doesn't prevent a career change later.
- Visiting schools:
  - Websites/brochures only tell you so much.
  - Contact individual schools and try to speak with current staff/students.
  - Try to get a sample lesson with faculty in that department.
- Safety/Target/Match
  - Look at program admission rates.
  - Has the student won awards, recognition, or competitions?
  - Talk to schools about institutional priorities and pay attention to trends.
  - GPA + course selection/rigor in HS matters—comparable artistic apps will stand out with an extra year of math.
- Slides:  Where are the Lines\_.pdf

## Notetaker

- Alyx Matchett

# Saturday, Sept. 20

## More Than Meets the Eye: Helping Students Discover Unexplored Engineering Fields

### Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Beth Dickey, Head, Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Carnegie Mellon University
- Jann Lacoss, Assistant Director of College Counseling, Westridge School
- Justin Mohney, Director of Recruitment, Carnegie Mellon University
- David Tomasko, Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Services, College of Engineering, Ohio State University

### Session Overview

- The seminar provided an in-depth look at the current landscape of engineering education and admissions in the U.S., with perspectives from college admissions officers, faculty, and college counselors.
- Topics included:
  - The national engineering landscape and trends in engineering disciplines
  - The transition from high school to college and from college to career in engineering
  - The multidisciplinary nature of engineering careers
  - The importance of hands-on experiences and exposure to different engineering fields
  - The application process for engineering programs (institutional, college, and major-specific approaches)
  - Resources and strategies for counselors to guide students interested in engineering

### Session Notes & Key Takeaways

#### 1. Seminar Overview: What Was Covered

#### 2. Key Takeaways

- Engineering Is Multidisciplinary:
  - Most engineering jobs are not limited to a single discipline; Teamwork across fields is common.
  - Job titles and functions often become more important than the specific major as careers progress.
- Demand for Specialized Fields:
  - There is a high demand for graduates in smaller engineering disciplines (e.g., materials science, industrial engineering), but awareness among students is low.
  - Outreach and exposure to these fields can help fill industry needs.
- Hands-On and Experiential Learning:
  - Students benefit from hands-on experiences, such as lab work, summer programs, and extracurriculars (robotics, science Olympiad, etc.).

- Teachers and counselors are encouraged to connect with local universities and organizations for opportunities.
- Admissions Pathways Vary:
  - Three main application models:
    - i. Apply to the institution (exploratory, most flexible)
    - ii. Apply to the college of engineering (somewhat focused, still flexible)
    - iii. Apply to a specific major (most focused, least flexible, can have varying selectivity)
  - Selectivity is highest in the largest, most popular majors (e.g., mechanical, computer engineering).
- Preparation and Prerequisites:
  - Math (through pre-calculus or calculus) and science (biology, chemistry, physics) are foundational.
  - Computer science/programming is helpful but not required for admission; colleges can teach these skills.
- Equity and Access:
  - Not all students have access to advanced courses or extracurriculars; admissions offices are aware and consider context.
  - Counselors should help students explain gaps or limitations in their applications.
- Licensure and Career Paths:
  - Most engineering jobs do not require licensure, but some (e.g., civil, structural) do.
  - ABET-accredited degrees are important for those seeking licensure.

### 3. What College Counselors Should Be Attentive to

- Encourage Exploration:
  - Guide students to explore a wide range of engineering fields, not just the most popular ones.
  - Use resources like the "Map of Engineering" and connect students with professionals and university programs.
- Highlight Hands-On Opportunities:
  - Promote lab experiences, summer programs, and partnerships with local universities or industry.
- Understand Application Models:
  - Advise students on the differences between applying to the institution, college, or specific major, and the implications for flexibility and selectivity.
- Support Students With Limited Access:
  - Help students articulate any gaps in their academic preparation due to school limitations (e.g., lack of calculus or physics) in their applications.
- Stay Informed on Trends:
  - Be aware of the growing importance of interdisciplinary skills (e.g., data science, AI, sustainability) in engineering.
- Promote Equity:
  - Ensure all students, including those from underrepresented or rural backgrounds, are aware of pathways and resources available to them.
- Prepare for Changing Admissions Landscape:
  - Stay updated on changes in admissions practices, especially regarding selectivity in certain majors and the increasing use of holistic review.

## Additional Conversation With Carnegie Mellon AOs

The conversation focused on undergrad admissions strategies, with insights from experienced admissions professionals. Topics included the value of academic achievement over institutional prestige, financial considerations for students, the role of national college fairs, recent changes in CMU's removal of ED2 policy, and the rationale behind supplemental essay questions.

### Key Takeaways:

1. Academic Background Over Prestige:
  - Admissions committees prioritize students' academic achievements and potential for success over the prestige of their undergraduate institution.
  - Students from lesser-known programs can distinguish themselves and succeed in top graduate programs if they have a strong academic record.
2. Financial Considerations:
  - Scholarships and financial aid can make graduate education accessible and reduce student debt.
  - Many top graduate programs offer funding, making it possible for students to attend without incurring significant debt.
3. National College Fairs and Receptions:
  - National college fairs and university-hosted receptions are valuable opportunities for students and counselors to gather information and network. Universities often hold receptions at major conferences and in various regions, which can be leveraged for outreach.
4. Changes in CMU's ED2 Policy:
  - The change was driven by application volume and the need to allocate resources efficiently.
  - The policy now aligns with ED1 and regular decision timelines, allowing for a more manageable review process.
5. Supplemental Essay Questions:
  - The "Defining Success at College" essay is designed to assess a student's growth mindset and understanding of the college experience, not just their career goals or credentials.
  - Strong responses focus on personal growth, community engagement, and the learning environment, rather than simply listing achievements or aspirations.

### Recommendations for College Counselors:

- Emphasize to students that academic performance and personal growth are more important than the prestige of their undergraduate institution.
- Encourage students to seek out and attend national college fairs and university receptions for networking and information gathering.
- Stay informed about policy changes at target institutions (e.g., CMU's ED2 policy) and communicate these updates to students.
- Guide students in approaching supplemental essays with authenticity, focusing on their growth, values, and what they hope to gain from the college experience, rather than just listing credentials or goals.
- Remind students that admissions committees value diverse experiences and perspectives, and that essays are an opportunity to showcase individuality and a growth mindset.

## Notetaker

- Kevin Ma

# Character Counts: Making Your Personality Shine in 150 Characters

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Sam Joustra, College Counselor, Collegewise
- Robert Penman, Executive Director, UC Davis
- Ashley Armato, Associate Director of College Counseling, The Lovett School (Atlanta, GA)
- Exree Hipp, Associate Director of Admission, Denison University (Granville, OH)

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Students tend to think that the essay is the only place they can share personal qualities. They forget the activity list is also a place where they can reveal pieces of themselves by moving away from the “what” of the activity and into the “why.”
- Colorful examples from presenters' 150-word bios:
  - “Always the last one off the dance floor” (vs. “loves to dance”)
  - “I plan my life out eight months in advance and will color code anything that's not tied down” (vs. “planner”)
- Why does this matter in admissions?
  - Extracurriculars tell us something about students—the things they're interested in, what they're hoping to do with their lives, how they might be active members of our communities. As institutions have gotten more selective, it can show us who's standing out.
  - Admissions officers want to see what students are going to be like outside the classroom. Residential colleges aren't just looking for people who are going to be academically successful; they're trying to assemble a class that will thrive together on campus.
  - How students manage and occupy their free time is an important part of their success in college.
- From an admissions perspective, the activity list has the potential to demonstrate...
  - Leadership
  - Creativity
  - Love of learning
  - Concern for others/altruism
  - Maturity
  - Entrepreneurial spirit
  - What is the student interested in?
  - What do they care about?
  - Are they likely to be an active member of the campus community?
  - Per Denison rep—Reps actually pay attention to this. He's able to note characteristics he sees in an applicant's activity list/traits he sees the student exhibiting in a file (sometimes this may mean choosing from a list or adding a “tag”)
- The counselor's role should be helping students understand the why beyond what they do.

- Mentioned CEG's Values Exercise and Roles & Identities as a great tool for understanding and giving words to who they are within an organization or what they're bringing to an activity.
- More isn't always better (in terms of number of activities and also in terms of number of words)
  - You can use 350 characters (for the UCs) and say a whole lot of nothing
  - You don't need to feel pressured to fill all 10 slots. Make sure your activities speak to what you're interested in and what you're actually doing—not just listing for the sake of listing.
  - Soccer example: you don't have to explain how soccer is played or basics like attending practice and playing games. Explain what it means to you to be on the soccer team: "Through soccer, I discovered my passion for leadership . . ."
- Counselor's role
  - Zoom out—think about the totality of their app. Encourage students to be thoughtful, intelligent, and diligent about the self they're putting forth. Yes, a curated self, but authentic.
  - There isn't a right or wrong answer with activities—it's what you want to share.
  - Quality > quantity.
    - If I removed this, would my application be missing anything?
    - If you couldn't put this on your application, would you still do it?
    - Consider MIT, which only allows FOUR activities. You have to be judicious in terms of determining the very most meaningful parts of yourself to share.
    - There aren't specific boxes admissions officers are looking to check off
  - Ranking activities—does order matter?
    - Remember they have a short time to review this. The first 3-4 will be the most memorable/make the most impact.
    - What are you most proud of accomplishing?
    - If they could only talk about 3 things about you, what would it be?
    - It can be baffling to students that there's no "right answer" for the order.
  - Make sure the math counts. Not every waking hour has to be dedicated to doing something.
- Don't be afraid to make it your own!
  - It can be hard to break them out of the "resume" mindset of accomplishment listing.
    - Give me some color.
    - Show a process.
    - Talk about a transformation.
  - Two different examples of family responsibilities
    - Family Responsibilities—Older sibling; Look after younger brother; Drive the extracurricular activities; look after cousins
    - Translating for parents, arranging various appointments—I am the only member of my household who is fluent in English. I perform all household tasks, including paying bills, arranging doctor appointments and home repairs, and completing school and travel documents. I also translate emails, documents and instruction manuals for my parents. (this one provides context and color that the prior one does not)

- Note: per reps, it's fine to put some info in the "position" or "organization" spots—in fact, the UC rep said giving context in that space is "orienting."
    - Note: per reps, it's fine to "double dip" with family responsibilities (checking a box under "family responsibilities" but also including it in the activity list to provide more context for experiences that could widely differ.
- More on Counselors Role
  - Give students permission to let their personalities shine through
  - Maximize space using commas, semicolons, and ampersand
  - Use specific details—how would your description be different from someone else who's on the same club or on the same team?
  - There is no perfect recipe for success. If you pursue what you love, that may mean you're not in every afterschool activity, or your activity list looks different than that one kid who got into Duke.
  - There's a time and place for the "what." But we should at least open the door to the other stuff surrounding the activity. For some students that feels authentic and for others it doesn't—but you can't know until they have permission to look at their activities in that way.
    - Tell me a funny story from your part-time job.
    - Tell me a moment you're proud of.
    - What's the best part of your job/club?
    - What's the worst part of your joy/club (see: sushi example)
    - PR or a moment you're proud of. That little anecdote can come to the forefront and make them shine. See the bowling one! If you're bad but really proud of yourself, great! We learn something from this—it's not all about winning or being good—but she does this for the joy!
  - Some really great examples:
    - Regularly babysit kids aged 2-6; perfected my ability to sneak vegetables into macaroni and cheese; calmed tantrums (the children's, not mine)
    - I've been promoted to various roles at this hot spot. Distinguishing 20 sushi roll types is tricky, but I love interacting with coworkers & clients (note: this came from what I love/what I hate)
    - Had so much fun at state championships. We bowled for 8 hours straight and ate tons of junk food. Despite being the worst team, I bowled 4 strikes! (Note: accomplishment doesn't have to be winning! Shows personality and joy they take in this sport.)
- Ethical use of AI
  - Suggesting better action verbs (is this different from consulting a list?)
  - Suggesting reductions in word/character count. You're still asking them to try and then make smart decisions, to decide what feels authentic to them. Must be a human/AI collaboration.
  - Now more than ever, it's OK to sound like an 18-year-old. If an admissions officer thinks it sounds like AI—it may not cause them to throw out your application, but you've lost something.
- Questions
  - "Resume Poetry"—few words, max impact.
  - Remember that "List in order of importance to you" is part of directions.

- How do we make the math math when hours ebb and flow throughout the year?
  - Figure hours per month; divide by four to get average per week.
  - Per reps—wouldn't hate if they explained the variable time commitment in the description space.

## **Notetaker**

- Mary Beth Foster

# More Than Meets the Eye: Helping Students Discover Unexplored Engineering Fields

## Presenters' Names and Organizations

- Beth Dickey, Head; Department of Material Science & Engineering, Carnegie Mellon
- Jann Lacoss, Assistant Director of College Counseling, Westridge School
- Justin J. Mohny, Director of Recruitment, Carnegie Mellon
- David L. Tomasko, Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Services in the College of Engineering, Ohio State University

## Session Notes & Key Takeaways

- Companies almost always hire more than one type of engineer
- Engineering is multidisciplinary and a team sport
- There's a high demand for engineering fields that are less popular majors. For example, many companies are looking for material science but pull from other majors and retrain
  - Specifically touched on Materials Science & Engineering, Biological & Agricultural Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Industrial & Systems Engineering
- Engineering doesn't typically require advance degrees beyond Bachelor's
- Prospective engineers like to:
  - Identify problems and find solutions
  - Solve puzzles and problems
  - Design and conduct experiments
  - Dismantle and rebuild things—or just build!
  - Focus on both the minutiae and the big picture
- Main types of engineering:
  - Chemical, Civil, Electrical, Industrial, and Mechanical, but there are LOADS more!
- Slides:  NACAC Session - More Than Meets the Eye.pdf
- Resources:
  - [The Map of Engineering](#)
  - Pull Don't Push (Julie Newman): ISBN-13: 978-1544518978
  - [Undergraduate Engineering Programs](#)
  - [ALL Engineering Majors & Careers Explained | 22 Types of Engineers](#)
  - [CACHET \(College Admissions Collaborative Highlighting Engineering and Technology\)](#)
  - [Society of Women Engineers \(SWE\)](#)

## Notetaker

- Alyx Matchett