



INSIGHTS

Member-to-Member

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

Summer 2025

What the House v. NCAA Settlement Means for Student-Athletes

INSIDE



5
Balancing prospecting and student support during application season



7
Making the college process more joyful and less stressful



9
FAQs about IECA committees

FAQs About IECA's Committees of the Membership

By Sherri Maxman, IECA (NY), Vice President for Committees

If you've been an IECA member for even a brief period, you've probably heard something about committees and maybe even have a general sense of what those committees do—but perhaps that's the extent of your knowledge. That was certainly the case with me for quite some time after I joined IECA. My understanding deepened only when I was invited to become a member of the Learning Differences/Neurodiversity (LD/ND) Committee in 2020. After two years, I moved into the position of committee chair, then became chair ex officio. And now I serve as vice president of committees, which feels like the process has come full circle.

But what exactly are the IECA committees, and what do they do? I'm here to explain so that not only will you gain knowledge about our committees, but you may even be inspired to join one!

So...what exactly are IECA's committees?

Member-led committees are an integral part of IECA's leadership structure. There are two types of committees:

Committees of the Board are led by IECA board members, and committee members are appointed annually by the board president or, in the case of the Nominating Committee, through election by the membership. These committees include Audit, Board Development, DEIA, Education & Training, Ethics & Standards of Practice, Finance, Government Relations, Membership, and Nominating.

Committees of the Membership are comprised primarily of IECA Professional members, and most committees have several Associate members as well. These positions are appointed annually by the board president in consultation with the vice president of committees and each committee's outgoing leadership.

There are nine Committees of the Membership that reflect members' interests and specialties: Business Practices, College, Community, Global, Graduate School, LD/ND, Outreach, Schools, and Therapeutic.

Each committee includes a chair, vice chair, chair ex officio (the previous year's chair), and six to eight members from

IECA's general membership, though committees may request additional members when needed.

What do committees do?

Committees serve many functions, including:

- Providing opportunities for members to work together on planning and creating events ranging from tours to roundtables to forums in which members can discuss topics related to their areas and specialties.
- Serving as training grounds for future leaders of IECA, including board members.
- Reviewing IECA's policies on matters such as ethics, tour guidelines, and specialty applications.



- Planning pre-conference workshops and breakout sessions at each IECA Annual Conference.
- Advancing goals established by IECA's Board of Directors.
- And much more!

Here are some examples of what committees have recently accomplished:

- At the Detroit conference, the Community Committee launched the Conference Buddy Program, pairing first-time conference attendees with veteran attendees.



Sherri Maxman, College Maven LLC, can be reached at sherri@college-maven.com.

continued on page M4



What the House v. NCAA Settlement Means for Student-Athletes

By Dave Morris, MEd, IECA (WA)

Beginning in the 2025–26 academic year, the most visible level of college sports, NCAA Division I, is changing the game. While name, image, and likeness (NIL) will still exist and students at all levels of intercollegiate athletics will have opportunities to monetize their intellectual property, the *House v. NCAA* settlement represents a major turning point: the most visible NCAA programs are transitioning to paying athletes directly.

The other big adjustment from a student perspective will be roster limits. The transition from scholarship limits to roster limits generally makes sense, but the implementation has been rushed and problematic. The roster limits in some sports (track particularly) created situations where there were significant roster cuts and even some scholarship signees were impacted. Figuring out how to implement these cuts without penalizing students is the final hold up to the court approving the settlement.

Obviously, direct payments totaling \$20.5 million per school to athletes takes up a lot of media interest, as does the controversy about roster cuts. The changes among Power Four schools and other D1 schools that “opt-in” are significant, but **outside of Power Four football, basketball, and a few outlier programs in other sports at these schools, recruiting remains unchanged.** Coaches are charged with assembling their rosters in addition to all other duties and with little or no training. So, among the more than 2,000 colleges outside the Power Four and Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), the median NIL deal is in the low two figures. Athletic scholarships are discounts that have the same value as merit scholarships or any other form of institutional aid. The bifurcation of college sports has become more dramatic and looks to be increasing, even as the difference in talent between divisions for most sports remains very small.



The following are significant trends related to intercollegiate athletics:

- **For Power Four and other “opt-in” conferences/institutions, roster caps rather than scholarship limits will be the new reality.** But this change is very unlikely to impact rosters at other schools. The students impacted by these limits are overwhelmingly at their current schools as walk-ons and are not going to transfer to Divisions II, III, or NAIA schools they were unwilling to attend out of high school.
- **Title IX is now a dead letter.** To the extent women’s sport continues to thrive, it is based on the commitment of participants and institutions. There is no possibility of enforced compliance at this point and direct payouts are being made specifically without regard to gender equity. It is worth pointing out that discrimination against women in college admissions was endemic prior to the adoption of Title IX.

continued on page M5



Dave Morris, College Athletic Advisor, can be reached at Dave@CollegeAthleticAdvisor.com.

- The Schools Committee planned and hosted the first-ever Schools Symposium, held in New Jersey in September 2024.
- The LD/ND Committee successfully executed the first official LD/ND tour since 2020, touring 11 campuses and meeting with seven college transition programs in the greater Boston area.
- The Global Committee presented the third European Regional Symposium. This dynamic gathering, hosted by the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland and planned in collaboration with the European Regional Group and IECA staff, brought together IECs, university representatives, and key stakeholders from Europe and the United States.
- The Business Practices Committee conducted a pre-conference workshop on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) Goals in Detroit.
- The Outreach Committee hosts virtual happy hours and webinars twice annually about the benefits of IECA membership. Many participants apply for IECA membership following the events.
- The Therapeutic Committee offers weekly Connect & Collaborate meetings, where IECA members can talk about cases and update each other on the latest events and trends in the industry.
- The Graduate Committee holds webinars to discuss relevant topics affecting graduate education, such as evolving funding issues.
- The College Committee organized two tours in the spring (in Washington, DC/Virginia and Pennsylvania) and two this fall (New England and Wisconsin/Illinois).

What would my responsibilities be as a committee member?

This depends upon the committee and its needs. Most committees meet monthly, with various tasks to accomplish in between. These may include writing articles for Insights, planning webinars and conference roundtables, organizing tours or symposia, or contributing to subcommittees.

Leadership opportunities, such as chairing a subcommittee, are often available to committee members. If you are unsure about your availability to contribute to your committee's work, you can discuss this with your committee chair to come up with a solution that is agreeable to everyone. While the work should not be onerous, members are expected to attend committee meetings and participate actively.

How do I become a committee member?

There are several ways this can happen! Members are nominated by committee chairs (in consultation with the vice president of committees and the committees' outgoing leadership) and then approved by the board president. The chair may approach you about joining a committee, or you may express interest by reaching out to the chair directly.

You can also indicate your interest by completing IECA's Volunteer Survey (link.IECAonline.com/Volunteer-Interest), found on the Get Involved page of the IECA website and distributed each January. This lets chairs know which members are interested in joining specific committees.

Each year, committee chairs nominate a vice chair, with the understanding they will become chair the following year. After serving as chair for a year, members serve as chair ex officio for one term before rolling off the committee.

Committee members typically serve two-year terms unless appointed vice chair or chair. Chairs must be Professional members of IECA; vice chairs must be Professional members or in the process of becoming one at the time of their appointment.

Members are nominated by committee chairs (in consultation with the vice president of committees and the committees' outgoing leadership) and then approved by the board president.

Can I contribute without actually being a committee member?

Absolutely! Committees frequently look outside their membership for assistance with bigger projects such as tour or symposia planning. Chairs may ask fellow IECs to participate in subcommittees. You are always welcome to express your interest directly to chairs.

Why should I join a committee?

There are many reasons! Among them:

- You can contribute to the ongoing efforts of IECA to make sure that each member has the best possible experience and opportunity to learn on an ongoing basis.
- You will gain valuable experience in working with others toward a common goal and develop leadership skills if you serve as vice chair or chair (with the possibility of future leadership on the board).
- It's a great way to meet and interact with other IECs.
- It's really enjoyable!

Consider becoming involved in one of our dynamic committees—it's sure to be a positive, enriching, and rewarding experience!



For more ways to deepen your engagement in IECA, visit our *Get Involved* webpage at IECAonline.com/about-ieca/get-involved or scan the QR code.

Five Tips to Balance Prospecting and Student Support During Application Season

By Lindsay Fried Augustine, IECA (GA), and Barbara Rifkind, IECA (NY)

For college independent educational consultants (IECs), August marks more than the beginning of the school year: peak application season is looming. It's the time of year when inboxes begin to overflow, deadlines loom, and the focus rightly shifts to supporting our current students. Yet this intense period also coincides with inquiries from prospective families seeking guidance for the next cycle. How can you show up fully for your current clients without letting future business fall through the cracks?

Here are a few practical strategies to help you manage both:

1. Block Time for Prospecting, Starting Now

While your instinct may be to pause all outreach, carving out even a few minutes daily for business development can pay dividends. Dedicate 20 minutes each day to respond to new inquiries, seek out a PTSA partnership, send a monthly newsletter to prospects, or post a helpful blog on social media. These micro-touches keep your presence alive without derailing your day.

2. Create an Interest List for Future Clients

Rather than scheduling consultations during your busiest weeks, consider setting up a waitlist or interest form for families seeking your services for the next

cycle. Let them know when they'll hear back from you ("We'll reach out with scheduling options in early December"). This approach sets expectations while keeping your pipeline warm.



Or, to make room for consultations without feeling like you're being pulled in too many directions, block off specific afternoons or days each week for prospective families. This allows you to be fully present during those windows, without splitting focus when your seniors need you most.

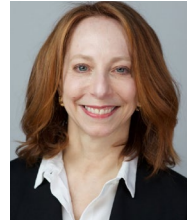
3. Automate the Initial Touchpoints

Simple automations can maintain marketing momentum without requiring constant manual input. Leverage

continued on page M7



Lindsay Fried Augustine, *Simply Admissions*, can be reached at Lindsay@SimplyAdmissions.com.




Barbara Rifkind, *Arise Advising*, can be reached at Barbara@AriseAdvising.com.

NCAA Settlement, from page M3

- **NCAA Division I is splitting into "opt-in" and "opt-out" conferences/programs on top of the FBS/FCS divide.** It remains to be seen whether these institutions can find common ground to stick together or if the Power Four conference schools will want to formally break the division, or even the NCAA apart.
- **The NCAA will not be enforcing compliance with NIL and House settlement rules.** The Power Four Conferences have created a "College Sports Commission" to enforce these rules. This body is likely to be challenged in court and the

arguments that will be used in that challenge have been successful to this point.

- **Congress is considering various proposals and may act.** What that might look like is difficult to predict. Given the current patchwork of state laws around NIL, and the aggressive moves by state legislatures, federal regulation seems inevitable, but the timeline is, at best, unclear.

For the vast majority of prospective student-athletes, the rules are not changing in a significant way. You won't see that on ESPN, but it is wise to remember. This includes roster caps and transfer regulations. 

Members Helping Members

"**Gabriel Solorzano** has gone above and beyond in his role as chair of the College Fair Subcommittee over the past year. The committee thrived thanks to his thoughtful guidance and encouragement of teamwork. His exceptional technological skills have greatly benefited not only the committee but the entire association. Gabriel took the initiative to create a comprehensive database that updates and streamlines college information, making it accessible to multiple committees. His ability to organize and edit information efficiently has significantly enhanced the process of connecting with colleges. Gabriel's professionalism, organization, and calm demeanor have made him an invaluable leader. Thank you, Gabriel, for your dedication and impact!"



-Jennifer Almoney

"I just want to extend a heartfelt thank you to **Debbie Schwartz** and to the wider IEC community she has cultivated for being so incredibly supportive as I transitioned to medical leave. I've known Debbie for over 10 years and have seen her build a strong, thoughtful network of colleagues—not just for professional development, but for real connection and collaboration. She's passionate about bringing IECs together to better support students and families, and it truly shows. I'm so grateful to call her not only a colleague, but also a friend."



-Dana Roth

If you've been encouraged, supported, or helped by another member in a generous, quiet way, give them a shoutout to recognize their kindness. Send your story to Insights@IECAonline.com.

IECA 2025 Award Honorees

Thank you all for your tremendous efforts benefiting IECA and the profession. Congratulations to our 2025 award recipients! All awards were presented during the IECA 2025 Annual Conference in Detroit, Michigan.



Mark H. Sklarow: Steven R. Antonoff Award for Professional Achievement, IECA's highest recognition for demonstrated leadership and collegueship.



Bar Clarke and Lucy Pritzker: Mark H. Sklarow Excellence in Advocacy Award, in honor of their work advocating for students and families and the IEC profession.



Jenny Buyens, Kate Haigney, Sherri Maxman, Reid Meyer, Nancy Steenson, Cigus Vanni: Mentorship Excellence Award, in recognition of their significant impact on the professional development of their IEC mentees.



Brooke Daly, Gina Lee, Margaret Martin, Kathy Nauta, Patricia O'Keefe, Gabriel Solorzano, and Justin Wang: Service Award, for outstanding volunteer efforts above and beyond their designated leadership roles.

Sara Cavalieri, Stephanie Foundoulis, Renee Lurie, Idris McClain, Tina Pratt, Barbara Rifkind, Ilene Rosen, and Cigus Vanni: Making a Difference Award, in recognition of their exemplary and selfless volunteer efforts benefiting the association's membership.

Ethics, Anyone?

By Chris Andersson (NY), MA, Vice President for Ethics & Standards of Practice

As our work is heating up with the arrival of those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer, I thought I'd gently slide our gaze through the haze to the subject of...ethics!

Did that hit you like a lead balloon? Or did your eyes light up at the prospect of a little ethics-chatter?

In the spirit of education, I'd like to go back to the Greeks...Socrates, in particular.

Socrates is often referred to as the father of what is called "virtue ethics." He famously argued that "virtue is knowledge" and that possessing this knowledge is essential for living a good and happy life. He believed that wrongdoing stems from ignorance, and that true virtue—which he equated with wisdom—is the only path to *eudaimonia*.

Eudaimonia. There's a word for you. I'm going to work that into our *Principles of Good Practice* somehow. *Eudaimonia* is a Greek term often translated as "happiness" or "flourishing," and it represents a state of living well and achieving one's highest potential. Sounds lovely, doesn't it?

As our newly appointed VP for Ethics & Standards of Practice, I'd like to encourage us all to work toward becoming our best selves—moving toward wisdom and away from ignorance. I have been impressed by the level of erudition among our members since I joined IECA. We push our students to reach for the stars and can inspire them by our own efforts to live a good and happy life.

Our committees and affinity groups help us on that path by raising questions, increasing awareness, teaching us. We have countless guest speakers and hosted webinars to illuminate us on a plethora of topics. I urge you to take advantage of the many educational and professional development opportunities that our association provides. If we continue to learn together, we will collectively grow stronger and be that much closer to the beautiful state of *eudaimonia*.

We push our students to reach for the stars and can inspire them by our own efforts to live a good and happy life.

I will use this space to highlight elements of ethics and standards of practice that guide our profession—in an effort to keep those principles front of mind and to offer insight into the sometimes-hazier areas of the work we do. Please don't hesitate to send questions or thoughts my way. Our *Principles of Good Practice* ([link. IECAonline.com/POGP](http://IECAonline.com/POGP)) serve as a guide for all of us and I suggest taking a peek at it from time to time. It should be your first go-to when that little question pops up in the back of your mind.

In the meantime, remember how much you enjoy what you do! Be grateful for your students! Embrace your significance in their lives! And keep on learning! 🚀

Business Practices, from page M5

your website, scheduling platforms like Calendly, email autoresponders, or project management systems to help you engage with prospects without requiring your personal attention and time. With these tools, you can easily share answers to FAQs, schedule consultations during your preferred windows, collect intake forms, and more.

4. Use Your Current Work to Market Naturally

You don't need to craft elaborate campaigns to market your business; sharing glimpses of the work you're already doing can be just as effective. A quick post about helping a student hit "submit," a blog about essay themes you're seeing, or tips for staying calm during early decision season all reinforce your expertise.

5. Remember: Business Development Is Client Care

Continued growth allows you to serve students sustainably. By thoughtfully building for the future—whether that means adding resources, hiring additional support, or simply updating your systems—you're investing in your ability to show up fully for the families you support now and those you'll serve next.

Balancing client care with business growth is a challenge every small business faces, but it rings especially true in our field, where the stakes feel personal. However, with clear boundaries and a few efficient processes, you can honor your current students and set your future self up for success. 🚀



Chris Andersson,
Nothing But Drama, can
be reached at [Chris@
NothingButDrama.com](mailto:Chris@NothingButDrama.com).

Making the College Application Process More Joyful and Less Stressful

By Joan Viebranz Lockwood, MBA, IECA (MA)

A topic that continues to generate discussion is the overarching theme of the stress and lack of joy for students and families as they embark on the process of applying to college. It is something I have discussed with colleagues, read about on a daily basis, and continue to think about every day. We have all experienced a text or an email from a parent about their latest stressor. While this is bound to happen, it is important to create a system and streamline communication so that students and parents can work through the process feeling educated, empowered, and calm (hopefully).



Speaking with other independent educational consultants (IECs), I have heard many of the same sentiments: “I have a student who texts late at night after recalculating their GPA or wanting to discuss something pressing.” Others talk about a parent who reaches out with an urgent message, “I was just speaking with another parent on the sidelines of my child’s sporting event, and she told me that the application to X University needed to be submitted last week. Can you confirm?!”

While we may not be able to recuse ourselves from all these panic moments, we can implement systems that promote calm, empowerment, and even enjoyment throughout the process. Here are some suggestions:

Manage Expectations Early

The first meeting with a family is a golden opportunity to outline your process, timeline, and communication style. Clarity from the outset fosters confidence and prevents misunderstandings.

Emphasize the importance of a **student-centered approach**—you are working primarily with the student to foster independence and maturity, while keeping parents informed in the background.

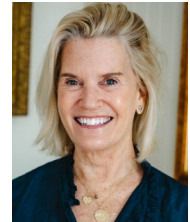
Start early to build trust with parents so they understand you’re accessible and responsive to any concerns that may arise...but also create reasonable expectations and boundaries.

Personalized and Consistent Communication

Thoughtful communication builds trust and lowers stress. A few strategies that have worked well for me and colleagues:

- Sending a **follow-up email after every student meeting**, along with a **monthly overview** to parents.
- Providing **weekly Monday morning emails** to senior students and families from mid-July through mid-December. These emails are brief, actionable check-ins that remind students of their priorities for the week.
- Holding **family meetings** at key points in the process, along with **parent-only check-ins**, to help maintain alignment and clarity.

continued on page M10



Joan Viebranz Lockwood, Launch to Life, LLC, can be reached at Joan@JoanLockwood.com.

Forms, Awards, and Appeals: How Financial Aid Strategy Can Grow Your IEC Practice

By Crystal Tate, IECA Associate (WA), and Cori Murphy, SCHOLARS Service Center

The college admissions journey is full of big questions—but none is quite as emotionally charged or financially impactful as this one: “Can we afford it?”

As independent educational consultants (IECs), we guide students through course planning, essays, and school selection with expertise and empathy. But when the topic turns to FAFSA, the CSS Profile, or comparing award letters, many IECs hesitate. Financial aid can feel like a maze of jargon, changing rules, and numbers that don’t add up.

However, offering clarity around affordability isn’t just a value-add for families—it’s also a smart business strategy. Helping clients navigate financial aid builds trust, differentiates your practice, and opens new revenue streams. Whether you handle it yourself or partner with experts, bringing this layer into your services is a win for families and for your business.

Here are five practical ways to integrate financial aid strategy into your work:

1. Go Beyond Net Price Calculators

Most families start their financial planning using net price calculators (NPCs), but these tools are rarely accurate. NPCs often rely on outdated data, don’t account for merit aid, and use assumptions that may not reflect a family’s real financial picture.

That’s why we take a different approach. We use an award-tracking spreadsheet that breaks down each college’s financial aid offer—including grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study. By tracking trends in how schools package aid and identifying front-loading practices or patterns in appeal outcomes, we provide families with a much clearer understanding of what college will actually cost.

This approach allows families to make apples-to-apples comparisons and makes you the trusted guide they didn’t even know they needed.



2. Decode Award Letters with Confidence

Financial aid award letters are anything but standardized. Families often don’t realize that a “generous” offer may include unsubsidized loans or Parent PLUS loans presented as aid. Others miss the fine print on renewal criteria for scholarships.

As IECs, we can help families spot:

- Hidden loans listed as awards
- One-time grants that don’t renew
- Conditions tied to GPA or enrollment status
- Gaps between cost of attendance and total aid

We provide award comparison tools that break down the net cost by school and include historical context, allowing families to see where offers stand relative to what’s typical. This clarity empowers families and reinforces your role as their advocate—not just for admissions, but for smart financial decisions.

3. Use Appeals to Unlock Additional Aid

Most families don’t know that financial aid awards can be appealed. Even fewer know how to do it effectively. As IECs, we’re in a prime position to help identify appeal opportunities—whether they stem from recent hardship (like job loss or medical expenses), updated financials, or competing offers.

You don’t need to write the appeals yourself, but you can educate families on:

- Which schools are open to appeals
- What documentation is needed
- How to frame an appeal to increase the odds of success



Crystal Tate, Crystal Clear College Planning and SCHOLARS Service Center, can be reached at Crystal@scholarscp.com.



Cori Murphy, SCHOLARS Service Center, can be reached at Cori@scholarscp.com.

continued on page M11

- **Educating parents along the way.** Some IECs send recordings of presentations on topics ranging from “Trends in College Admission” to “Paying for College” to “How to Make the Most out of the College Tour.”

What may seem like excessive over-communicating keeps everyone informed and engaged—even during quieter periods of the application cycle.

Connection, Humor, and Fun

Building authentic relationships with students can make all the difference. From day one, I look for a **personal connection**—a shared interest, a funny story, a surprising hobby—to create a foundation of trust and openness. There are opportunities to capture these through an intake form; I ask the student’s favorite candy or snack, so when I am finished with the process, I can include them with a personalized note of congratulations. Here are some other examples:

- One IEC colleague shared that she learned her student collected hermit crabs, got to know their names, and would ask to see them—even though they met on Zoom. She took the time to learn about hermit crabs and learned that they can actually get to know their owners and show affection—who knew?!
- I had a student who had been a contestant on the Kids Baking Championship, so we exchanged recipes and pictures of our different concoctions between our meetings.
- For those who have an office and meet with students in-person, snacks can go a long way. Students can help themselves and feel immediately comfortable. While I work remotely most of the time, I have been known to stop at a local coffee shop to grab a favorite drink or snack for them on my way to meet a student in person at their home as well.

Building authentic relationships with students can make all the difference.

*From day one, I look for a **personal connection**—a shared interest, a funny story, a surprising hobby—to create a foundation of trust and openness.*

Creative Interventions

One colleague had a student who was so stressed about the personal statement that she called the parents and asked them to surprise the student with their favorite breakfast—coffee and donuts from a local bakery—which could be enjoyed during the Zoom brainstorm session. What a fun and creative way to recreate the relaxed energy virtually.

Focus on What is Meaningful to the Student, Not the “Shoulds”

Students often ask, “Will this look good on my application?” I gently redirect the conversation away from what they “should” do and toward what they’re **genuinely interested** in exploring.

The process becomes more authentic and less formulaic when students engage in meaningful experiences. It is important to emphasize this throughout your work with the student. This was a common message at the IECA 2025 Annual Conference in Detroit, where college admission representatives noted that they are looking for students who are genuine in their interests, curiosity, and community engagement. This approach takes the pressure off the student (especially), freeing them to explore many different areas of interest or specifically focus on something which they truly want to learn.



Encouragement and Milestone Celebrations


Encouragement and compliments go a long way with students. I believe they already face enough pressure from their parents, peers, social media, and themselves without needing to add to the mix.

A simple statement like “This is great work. We’re making progress, and we’re doing it together. I am here to help you stay on track, and it will all get completed” can shift their entire demeanor. I see it in their posture, their face, and the energy they bring to the session.

Recognize wins—big and small—and make sure students know they’re not alone on this journey.

Final Thoughts

Stress is inevitable—but **how we manage it is not**. As IECs, we have the opportunity to reframe this process for students and their families. Through clear communication, personalized support, humor, and compassion, we can help them not only survive but actually enjoy this pivotal journey.

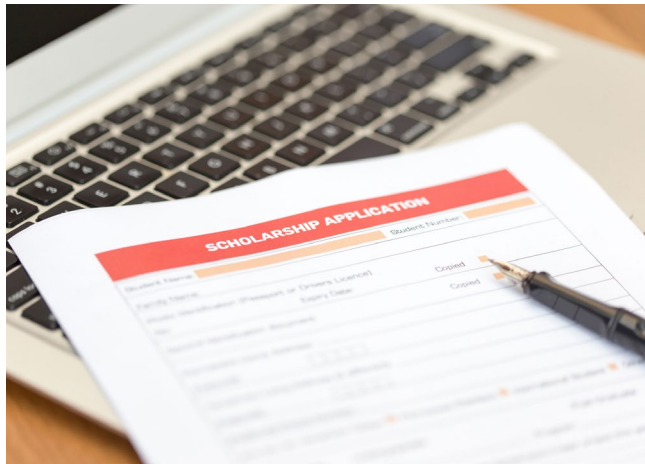
Let’s keep sharing what works—and keep bringing joy and calm back into the college application experience. 

“Show Me the Money:” Competitive Scholarships with Separate Applications

By Penny Linsenmayer, JD, IECA (TX)

As families grapple with the rising costs of college in an uncertain economy, they may turn to independent educational consultants (IECs) for guidance in maximizing their student's merit aid opportunities. Some parents may ask, “But is there more? This still isn't enough to make the cost affordable for us.”

Many merit aid scholarships are awarded solely based on the student's application for admission and do not always require that the student apply via Early Action. Sometimes these are automatic scholarships where a student can simply plot out their GPA and/or standardized test scores to determine what specific amount of annual merit aid scholarship will be awarded to them. Other colleges may specify a range of possible merit aid that a student might receive, without being transparent about any brightline criteria.



Still others may not specify even a potential range of merit aid, and in these cases, it's helpful for IECs to look

continued on page M12



Penny Linsenmayer,
Pathway Admissions, can
be reached at penny@
pathwayadmissions.com.

Financial Aid Strategies, from page M9

We've helped families secure thousands in additional aid through well-crafted appeals. Sharing success stories shows prospective clients that you're committed to getting them the best outcome—even after the acceptance letter arrives.

4. Partner, Don't Pretend

Let's be honest—not every IEC wants to become a financial aid expert. And that's okay. But having a process in place—whether it's a checklist, a trusted referral, or a back-end support partner—adds major value.

Many IECs are turning to white-labeled service centers that provide FAFSA/CSS Profile filing, award review, and appeal support behind the scenes, allowing you to offer this service without reinventing the wheel. Some IECs bundle financial aid support into higher-tier packages, while others offer it as an à la carte or referral-based add-on.

Either way, you stay focused on your strengths, and families get holistic guidance. It's a win-win.


5. Use Financial Aid Strategy to Grow Your Business

Offering financial aid guidance not only supports your current clients—it helps you attract new ones. When families hear that you help with scholarships, appeals, and reducing out-of-pocket costs, you become a trusted partner—not just for one student but for siblings, cousins, and entire communities.

When you position yourself as a guide for both admissions and affordability, you elevate your practice. Clients stop asking, “Is this worth the fee?”—because you've already saved them far more than they invested.

Final Thoughts

Families don't just want help choosing the right school—they want to know they're making a smart financial decision. IECs who integrate financial aid strategy into their practice meet that need head-on.

Whether you develop expertise in-house or use a partner to support that work, this is a space where your services can truly transform lives. When families save money and stress, they don't just thank you—they tell everyone they know. 

at past data and advise students to inquire directly with the college for additional information.

Beyond the assured or specified-range merit aid awards, some colleges have special, often significant full-tuition or full-cost merit scholarships, that require one or more of the following:

- Applying in the Early Action round(s) (or by a specified deadline)
- Submitting a separate application (typically with additional essays)
- Applying to the honors college
- Participating in interview(s)
- Attending a competitive scholars weekend in the winter or spring

Some of these special scholarships may require that the student be nominated for consideration. In limited cases, nominations might be needed as early as the spring of junior year (for example, Wofford College Scholars and Rensselaer Polytechnic's Medal awards).



To ensure that you are guiding your students toward meeting any special application requirements or deadlines for these competitive scholarships, you'll want to research, ideally with the student's active collaboration, the website scholarship section for each college your student is considering. You will ultimately acquire historical knowledge of some of these opportunities at colleges that your students regularly apply to, but there are cases where you might need to work with the student to identify if any special scholarships might be available at colleges on their list. If you are working with high-achieving students who either have strong financial need or who would need a significant merit award to make some colleges affordable, you may also want to proactively add to the student's list some colleges who offer full-tuition or full-cost scholarships.

Though the awards are exceptionally competitive even for the most highly qualified applicants, you can find these high-reward opportunities at some highly selective colleges, including Duke (Duke Scholars and Robertson Scholars), Emory (Woodruff Scholars), and Vanderbilt (Ingram Scholars). Among the more competitive public flagships, tippy-top students might earn a Park Scholars (North Carolina State University), Eminence Fellows (Ohio State), Nutmeg Scholars (University

of Connecticut), 40 Acres Scholars (UT-Austin), or Jefferson Scholars (University of Virginia) award.


There are a larger number of other colleges than you might guess who also offer full-cost or full-tuition scholarships. While Washington & Lee offers up to 44 full-cost Johnson Scholar awards each year, many other colleges may only have the funds to award a much smaller number of these scholarships each year. Even regional public universities or lesser-known small liberal arts colleges can be a source of awards that could be life-changing for your student. Central Michigan University awards up to 20 full-cost Centralis Scholars scholarships to incoming students each year, while Lees-McRae College awards a single full-cost Shelton Scholarship.

The Stamps Scholars Program has 37 partner institutions, though each institution sets the eligibility criteria, application process, and number of recipients. Georgia Tech awards the largest number of Stamps Scholars awards (up to 40), while the University of Arizona chooses five recipients (all of whom are Arizona residents). Many Stamps awards are full-cost, but some are full-tuition (the University of Oregon awards five full-cost Stamps awards to Oregon residents and five full-tuition awards to out-of-state students).

As you can see, some of these high-dollar scholarships have special selection criteria, including the student's residence, major, talents, or background. Davidson College's Bryan Scholars program awards one full-tuition scholarship to a male athlete and a female athlete each year. Case Western awards two full-tuition A.W. Smith Innovation awards to students majoring in engineering or certain other STEM fields. Leadership and character can often be a critical component in the selection process for some institutional awards, including Stamps Scholars, Wake Forest's Reynolds Scholarships or Seattle University's Sullivan Leadership Scholarships.

While many of these awards don't consider a student's financial need, it's important to understand that some are earmarked for lower-income students, such as Appalachian State University's Murray Access awards or Fairfield University's The Company Scholars full-cost awards for under-represented students from Jesuit or Cristo Rey high schools.

For some students who have the need or goal to make their undergraduate education as affordable as possible, it may be worth applying to a few colleges that would not otherwise be on their short list but where they stand higher odds of earning one of these larger scholarships. Many of the CTCL institutions have generous awards, such as Centre College's 10 full-tuition Grisson awards to first-generation students and their 10 full-cost Brown Fellows and 10 full-cost Lincoln Scholars awards. Catawba College, a lesser-known regional college, awards one full-tuition Socratic Scholarship, while the University of Mary Washington awards one full-cost Alvey Scholar award to an out-of-state applicant (with a stated preference for a STEM major).

The maxim that "full rides are rare" still holds true, and it's worth managing expectations for students and families since these higher-dollar awards are almost always awarded to students at the very top of an applicant pool (which of course can be difficult to predict). But your high-achieving students focused on affordability can increase their odds by casting a wide net, applying early, meeting deadlines or specific application requirements for eligibility, and being open to traveling for any winter or spring competitive scholars weekends. 

College Essay Challenges: Keeping Your Cool While Keeping Students on Track

By Susan Knoppow, Wow Writing Workshop

While the early months of the application season may have been smooth sailing, many students—regardless of how prepared they seemed—find themselves struggling to finish their essays.

It's not uncommon for students to start strong, then hit a wall. Perhaps they worked diligently early on, but suddenly, motivation wanes or distractions take over. Who wants to write a personal statement when prom is coming up? Who can concentrate on a *Why Us?* essay when that physics test is tomorrow morning?

Perhaps you've experienced these familiar scenarios:

- Procrastinators who keep promising they'll complete their essays, then repeatedly delay, often due to uncertainty or fear of failure.
- Students whose heightened anxiety hampers their ability to produce or finish their essays. They may doubt their writing skills, fear judgment, or feel overwhelmed by the weight of college admissions. These emotions can lead to avoidance, procrastination, and a cycle of stress.
- Parents so deeply invested in their child's future that they unintentionally add to the pressure, as well. In some cases, they push for quick progress or express disappointment over delays, which can heighten student stress or lead to conflict.

Understanding how to effectively guide students through these final hurdles is crucial—not only for their success, but also to help maintain your sanity during this busy season.

Here at Wow, we feel your pain: Whether you're facing procrastination, anxiety or parental pressure, we've experienced it too. Here are some of our best tips and resources for managing stress as deadlines approach. You can also use them to prevent similar situations in the future.

Start with Empathy

That's why you got into this line of work in the first place, right? We like students, and we know they (usually!) do their best. Recognize that students are often

battling internal fears, perfectionism, or mental health challenges. Validating their feelings and reframing the task can relieve some of the pressure.

Challenge: Procrastination and Anxiety

Solution: Shift Gears

When students are anxious or blocked, consider switching to supplemental essays rather than pushing for perfection on the personal statement. By shifting focus, you reduce the cognitive load and allow students to regain a sense of accomplishment. They might return to the personal statement later, if time allows, or simply move on and realize that all their essays are good enough.



Resource: Guide to Supplemental Essays

link.IECAonline.com/Wow-supplemental-essays

We use this guide with our students to help them understand a variety of prompts before they dive in and write their first drafts. While it may seem like a good idea to move directly to essay drafts if students have limited time, confirming that they understand the various

continued on page M14



Susan Knoppow can be reached at Susan@wowwritingworkshop.com.

prompts is even more important. It is nearly impossible to revise your way out of a poorly conceived idea. Make sure students know both what they want to write about and why they have chosen each topic.

Challenge: Limited Time

Solution: Create Schedules Ahead of Time and Set Realistic Expectations

Setting clear, achievable deadlines can make a huge difference. For example, tell a student, “Let’s aim to have a draft of your Duke essays by Thursday,” rather than an open-ended “finish your essays soon.” Clear targets create a sense of urgency without overwhelming. We create schedules ahead of time with our families, creating shared expectations that we can return to if students get off track.

Resource: Sample Schedule for the Common Application Personal Statement

link.IECAonline.com/Wow-schedule

This four-week plan is clear, manageable, with space for the student to miss a deadline or two without getting too far off track. If you don’t have time for a four-week Common App plan, that’s okay. Encourage students to share what they have within the time constraints you face. Sometimes, minor tweaks are more effective than over-polishing, which can prolong the process without substantial gains.

Challenge: Worried Parents

Solution: Focus on Willingness and Ability

You are probably already good at maintaining open communication with parents. As deadlines approach, use that positive relationship to emphasize the student’s improvement and forward motion. Trusting

what you’ve learned about the student’s willingness and ability to complete assignments is essential. If a student has reached a point where further effort may not yield meaningful progress, it’s wiser to accept their current draft and move forward. “Good enough” can be a strategic approach when deadlines are tight. This mindset does not compromise quality. Instead, it acknowledges realistic boundaries. Gently guide parents to trust the student’s process.


Trusting what you’ve learned about the student’s willingness and ability to complete assignments is essential.

Resource: Parent Tip Sheet – How to Help Without Taking Over

link.IECAonline.com/Wow-parents

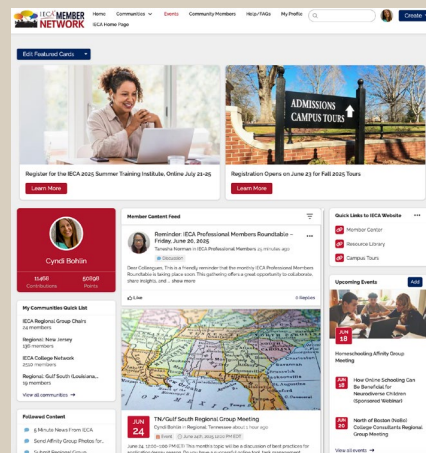
Some students thrive under pressure, so last-minute work is not always a disaster. However, if you don’t want to be reviewing applications the night before they are due, be sure to set clear boundaries for yourself as well. We tell students that final drafts of Early Action and Early Decision essays are due by October 10, so we have time for proofreading, last-minute tweaks, and worry-free submissions. Sure, we occasionally make an exception, but by establishing that expectation up front, we can comfortably tell a student “No” if we feel they are taking advantage of our time and generosity.

An Ounce of Prevention

Once the early deadlines have passed, make notes about what you want to improve for next season. Try creating schedules ahead of time, setting parent expectations differently, or finding ways to evaluate students’ willingness and ability before you reach a crisis. At Wow, our motto is “There are no college essay emergencies.” You can live that motto too. 

Member News

The IECA Member Network has a new look! This redesign features a modern, user-friendly interface to better serve our members. The updated platform offers improved navigation, enhanced event search functionality, and a mobile-friendly experience. Visit network.IECAonline.com to explore the new site and connect with IECA member colleagues today. Questions? Review the Member Network User’s Guide: link.IECAonline.com/member-network



Introducing IECA’s New Mentor Match Program

We’re excited to unveil IECA’s newly enhanced **Mentor Match Program**, designed to provide a more intuitive, engaging, and flexible experience for mentors and mentees alike. With the new system, you can effortlessly manage your match, monitor the progress of your mentoring relationship, and access tools designed to support meaningful, ongoing connections. We’re also thrilled to introduce **group mentoring** as a new option. Enroll today as a mentor or mentee at mentor.IECAonline.com.





SOCA Financial Aid Survey

By Elizete Groenendaal, MBA, IECA Associate (NY)

At IECA conferences, the Subcommittee on College Affordability (SOCA) runs a panel of 3-4 financial aid officers to gain insights into financial aid policies. This year, SOCA also conducted a survey among colleges participating in the Detroit conference and presented its findings as an introduction to the financial aid panel discussion.


We were thrilled to receive unique insights from 26 colleges. The data confirmed that there is no universal answer in financial aid practices, with exceptions on every single question. Policies are constantly evolving in response to changes in enrollment management, institutional priorities, or budgets. We hope to update the survey annually.

Sample findings and notable exceptions:

- To renew **need-based scholarships** in subsequent years, most colleges require good academic standing and filing FAFSA, even for some CSS schools.
 - *Bentley University*: Requires W-2 and tax returns
- **Scholarship Displacement**: Most colleges reduce or replace the family out-of-pocket by the scholarship amount—40 percent of colleges would not reduce the financial aid award, and only 8 percent would reduce the merit award.
 - *Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)* and *St. Olaf College*: No impact on financial aid up to the Cost of Attendance
 - *Hope College*: No impact if outside the scholarship sent to the student

- **Early Decision Financial Aid**: 92 percent of colleges provide ED students the same consideration for financial aid as non-binding admissions.
 - *Rhodes College*: offers additional ED grant
 - *Lawrence University*: offers the added benefit of full demonstrated need
- **Net Price Calculators (NPC)**: 96 percent of colleges said NPC is reasonably accurate within \$5,000. However, it depends on the data entered. Colleges can review NPC data and identify errors.
 - *Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)*: NPC is too conservative
 - *Connecticut College*: Conducts ED pre-reads, reviewing NPC against submitted data and taxes
 - *Bentley University*: NPC works for most, except for families with income earned outside the United States, significant business holdings, or divorced/separated parents



To see the spreadsheet containing an additional six questions and details of the above responses by college respondent, go to [link](https://IECAonline.com/SOCA-survey). IECAonline.com/SOCA-survey or scan the QR code. 



Elizete Groenendaal, UCompass College Planning, can be reached at Elizete@UCompass.net.



IECA 2025–2026 Leadership

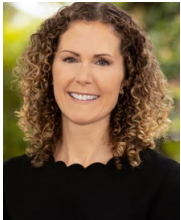
Executive Committee



President
Belinda Wilkerson (NC)



Vice President for Ethics & Standards of Practice
Chris Andersson (NY)



Vice President for Education & Training
Brooke Daly (NC)



Vice President for Committees
Sherri Maxman (NY)



Vice President for Membership & Engagement
Suzanne Lewis (AZ)



Secretary/Treasurer
Stephanie Klein Wassink (CT)



Immediate Past President
Ibrahim Firat (TX)



Members of the Board

Shannon Bergeron (TX)
Jess Chermak (CO)
Eric Endlich (CA)
Mindy Goodman (MD)
Anne Holmdahl (WA)
Amy McVeigh (MI)
Krissy Naspo (CT)
Juan-Camilo Tamayo (FL)
Shirley Xian (MN)

Committees of the Board

Audit

Chair: Juan-Camilo Tamayo (FL)

Board Development

Chair: TBD

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility

Chair: Shannon Bergeron (TX)
Vice Chair: TBD

Education & Training

Chair: Brooke Daly (NC)

Ethics & Standards of Practice

Chair: Chris Andersson (NY)

Finance

Chair: Stephanie Klein Wassink (CT)

Government Relations

Chair: Whitney Bruce (ME)
Vice Chair: Cheryl Chamberlain (IL)

Membership

Chair: Suzanne Lewis (AZ)

Nominating

Chair: Ibrahim Firat (TX)

Committees of the Membership

Business Practices

Chair: Barbara Rifkind (NY)
Vice Chair: Cindy McCormick, IECA Associate (CA)

College

Chair: Penny Klein (VT)
Vice Chair: TBD

Community

Chair: Jyoti Jain (CA)
Vice Chair: Tina Pratt (CA)

Global

Chair: Patricia O'Keefe (CA)
Vice Chair: Christine Eischen (Czech Republic/IL)

Graduate School

Chair: Caitlin Andersen (FL)
Vice Chair: TBD

Learning Differences/Neurodiversity

Chair: Josephine Vonarburg (NJ)
Vice Chair: Stephanie Mitchell (CT)

Outreach

Chair: Karen Handler Ryan (NY)
Vice Chair: Eleanora Ferrante (NY)

Schools

Chair: Margaret Martin (NH)
Vice Chair: Kristin Ryder (CO)

Therapeutic

Chair: Christi Lardieri (DE)
Co-Chair: Elaine Morgan (FL)