

PCACAC Living History

by Jim Jump

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Potomac & Chesapeake has been an important part of my professional life ever since I've had a professional life. I started my college admissions counseling career in August of 1976 (yes, I am that old), just out of college as an admissions counselor, otherwise known as a roadrunner, at my *alma mater*, Randolph-Macon College.

Two weeks after starting the job, I attended a workshop sponsored by PCACAC for admission newbies at Mary Baldwin College. Our host was Mary Baldwin's Director of Admissions, Jack Blackburn, later to become the legendary Dean of Admissions at the University of Virginia and the namesake for PCACAC's Jack Blackburn Award. At the workshop I learned that the first C in PCACAC is silent (it's pronounced "Pack-ack," not "Pack-cack-ack"). There was a session presented by a veteran school counselor, and I had no clue that one day I would be presenting a similar session at a similar workshop.

My rookie year in admissions was okay, but hardly spectacular. My travel area was New Jersey, which Randolph-Macon was trying to break in as a new territory, and I overscheduled myself such that I was on the road every week. I woke up most Sunday mornings that fall with my first thought being, "S--t, I have to drive to New Jersey today" (that's not a knock on New Jersey). Most of my travel was solo, but I was part of "Here Come the Virginians," an early experiment in group travel featuring ten private Virginia colleges. It was an idea whose time had not come. We visited five New England cities in December, and the tour got off to a less than auspicious start when canceled flights due to snow meant that only three of the ten reps made it to the first night's program. Then in January we visited five midwestern cities, picking the coldest week of the 20th century for our tour.

My first PCACAC conference was the following spring. The 1977 conference was at the University of Richmond, the only conference ever held on a college campus. I remember being at the conference and thinking "What a great group of people" and that it was too bad I would only be doing this work for a couple of years. Little did I know.

Potomac & Chesapeake at that time was largely a college-run organization, with a number of admission deans serving as active leaders in the organization. I'd like to see that become the case again. The organization was also largely dominated by institutions in Maryland and DC, whereas more recently there has been a perception that PCACAC is dominated by Virginia schools.

PCACAC's role in my professional growth became more pronounced when I moved to the secondary side of the desk as the Director of College Counseling at Hampton Roads Academy in the fall of 1984. At a conference session the next spring I happened to sit next to future PCACAC President and Apperson Award winner Arlene Ingram, who has since become one of my closest friends.

I also became involved in the organization, and that has been my most rewarding professional involvement. My first role was assistant chair of sessions on the conference planning committee, then becoming a delegate, then membership chair. I ultimately served three terms as President.

In case you are curious how that happened, midway through my elected term as President, the President-elect, Ronne Patrick (then at the University of Maryland and now at Washington University), informed me that she was taking a job outside the region. The PCACAC by-laws did not have a provision for succession in that circumstance, and Ronne and I put together a plan to have a past President step in as interim President, but when I began to present that proposal at the next Board meeting I was informed that the Board had already voted to have me serve a second term. My third term came about after Ann Powell, for whom the Ann Powell Mentoring program is named, was unable to serve her Presidential year due to illness. At the summer Board meeting at Goucher College, I was one of several former leaders of the Association asked to moderate a discussion regarding a succession plan. At one point we were asked to leave, and when invited back into the room the Board announced that it had decided on an interim President to fill out Ann's term and that they wanted it to be me. Out of loyalty to Ann and the association, I couldn't say no.

I have been proud to watch PCACAC's growth as an organization. It may be hard to believe, but for many years we operated without a budget. Arlene Ingram changed that. Arlene was also responsible for getting PCACAC tax-exempt status, something numerous Boards and Presidents had unsuccessfully attempted to accomplish over the years.

I have also watched with pride as PCACAC became one of the top affiliates within NACAC. I remember attending a NACAC Leadership Development Institute in the mid-1990s and driving around Dallas with President Jenifer Blair and Treasurer Arlene Ingram one afternoon to escape the Mary Kay convention we shared the hotel with. We thought that PCACAC was not at the level of some of the larger affiliates within NACAC. I don't think that is the case today. Potomac & Chesapeake is among the pantheon of affiliates, having produced five NACAC Presidents in the past quarter century, while no other affiliate has had more than two.

Now I am retiring, but I look back on my PCACAC experience with appreciation for all the friends I've made. During my time as President of NACAC, I was able to see a number of other affiliates, and I have yet to find one with the close relationships found in Potomac and Chesapeake.

Looking forward, here are my hopes for PCACAC:

1. Continue the collaboration across the desk. I worry that college admission and college counseling are becoming two professions rather than two sides of one profession.
2. Think of itself as a professional organization rather than a membership organization. Growing membership is important, but PCACAC should be focused on serving professionals on the front line in admission offices and in high schools, whether members or not. I was born on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and

throughout my time in the leadership of PCACAC I tried to think of how PCACAC could serve counselors in rural and inner-city high schools who may not have known that PCACAC exists.

3. On that note, look for new ways to offer professional development. There are lots of public-school counselors who can't attend the conference, but who need professional development regarding the college admissions process. Continue to offer drive-in workshops, but also present at state counselor association conferences, and offer in-service workshops for school districts.
4. Grow leadership within PCACAC. It is easy for an organization to become insular. Make sure that we encourage members to become involved and make sure that we give them ways to do it. I have talked to members who volunteered multiple times but were never given an opportunity. When I was President-elect, I found a way to involve every single person who volunteered for the conference planning committee. I hope we will especially nurture those new to the profession to grow as professionals and leaders.
5. Stand for admission practices that are ethical and student-centered.