

August 2026 Ethical Navigation: New Admission Officer at the Fair

[The Potomac and Chesapeake Association for College Admission Counseling \(PCACAC\) Admission Practices Committee](#) is proud to present *Ethical Navigations (EN)*, an educational effort to explore issues that might face professionals involved in the college admissions process.

Each month, *Ethical Navigations* explores a hypothetical scenario and potential avenues to approaching the situation using [NACAC's Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission](#) (GEPCA) as the lens. This guide is built on the *principles* of honesty, transparency, equity, and respect for students and fellow professionals while including the *core values* of education, access and equity, professionalism, collegiality, collaboration, trust, and social responsibility.

This Month's Scenario:

While preparing a table at a college fair, Summer from Sunflower University is pleased to meet the newly hired Peridot College admission counselor, August, who has been assigned the table across the aisle.

As they both prepare for the fair to open, Summer is delighted to see August's enthusiasm and energy. During their casual discussion, August expresses some nervousness as this is their first college fair, but they are excited to represent their alma mater.

Summer assures August that everything will be OK and just to answer questions as best they can. As the fair commences, Summer overhears several snippets of conversation. For example, when a family approaches August and asks about school spirit, August says, "Our spirit is great! Much better than at our rival, Crosstown College. They get no one to attend their basketball games." And later, "Well, all these colleges are great, but I wouldn't bother talking to Crosstown College."

These statements make Summer uncomfortable. What could they do?

The Conundrum:

Summer feels that making negative remarks about Crosstown College is unprofessional and inappropriate. While probably unintentional, August's comments might discourage students from considering Crosstown during a time when many institutions are looking to fill their classes.

While GEPCA does not explicitly prohibit peer comparisons the Guide does provide best practices to consider. Even though Summer is not a supervisor or work at the same college, there may also be an opportunity to become a professional mentor who welcomes August into the profession.

Possible Approach:

While NACAC is not in the business of enforcement, the organization's [Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission](#) could provide an important opportunity for discussion in this situation. This conversation could help develop a valuable professional relationship.

For example, one approach Summer could take is to casually check-in with August by asking, "What did you think of your first fair?" In the ensuing conversation, Summer could ask August if they had heard of NACAC and/or the Guide. Summer could even mention one of our profession's core values is professionalism. They could suggest that August check out the Guide.

If Summer wanted to be more specific, they could mention that there is a line about talking negatively about other colleges. Specifically, in section B. *Professional Conduct: Guiding Principles and Rationale*, the Guide states, "To maintain a culture of collaboration and collegiality, members should not disseminate inaccurate, misleading or disparaging information about other secondary schools, colleges, organizations, or individual professionals."

Across the college admission landscape, we see a lot of turn over. We also know many new professionals are looking for direction and inclusion. By taking this approach, Summer might help August develop as a college admission officer while also starting a casual mentorship. Many experienced NACAC colleagues fondly remember early career advice from seasoned professionals. NACAC members often say that one of the most important aspects of membership is building relationships, and this is an opportunity.

If you have any questions feedback, or proposals for future Ethical Navigations, please contact info@pcacac.org.

Do you have a question about NACAC's recommended ethical practices or a suggested revision to the [Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission](#)? Please submit via [this form](#) and a member of the national AP committee will follow up with you.