

## July 2024 Ethical Navigation: Academic Meltdown Impact on Admissions

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PCACAC is excited to present *Ethical Navigations*, an educational effort to proactively 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](#) 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:***

Cherry Garcia, an Admissions Counselor at Cookie Dough University is spending the summer preparing to welcome a new class of students, planning for upcoming recruitment events, and, most importantly, reviewing final transcripts for the incoming class. She receives an email from Mint Chip, a College Counselor at Waffle Cone Academy, with a final transcript attached for Mango Sorbet, one of CDU's incoming first-year students.

Cherry promptly opens the file and glances over the transcript, which includes a confirmed graduation date, Mint Chip's signature, and final grades. All seems to be in order until Cherry notices several very low grades in the student's senior year. A look at the overall GPA confirms it, Mango's GPA has dipped just below Cookie Dough University's usual admission threshold.

Unsure how to proceed, Cherry feels herself start to melt down, but then she remembers that the GEPCA can provide her with some insight into how to move forward. What ethical advice might Cherry take from GEPCA when it comes to a final transcript with red flags?

### ***Possible approaches:***

While the GEPCA does not directly address the issues of final transcripts or rescinding an offer of admission, our ethical guidelines could still guide Cherry's thinking when facing this rocky road.

Article 1. A. outlines NACAC's principle of truthfulness and transparency, stating that "*Members should provide comprehensive, truthful, and factual information that will allow all parties to make informed decisions.*" Furthermore, Article 1. A. 1. f), recommends, "*Colleges should make publicly available comprehensive, accurate, and current information concerning: Factors considered in making admission, financial aid, and scholarship decisions.*"

First, Cherry should consider how transparent the university has been, and how strictly it adheres to stated thresholds when it comes to GPA requirements for admission. In addition to considering what information was posted on the university's website, Cherry might also consider what information has been shared with admitted students on their admitted student portal and in the acceptance letter. For instance, did the letter state a specific GPA for admission or continued performance in course work already started?

Depending on the university's transparency, there could be several pathways Cherry and the admissions team might consider. These pathways could be based on GEPCA's principles which are outlined in the Preamble and state, "*Our work is guided by principles of honesty, integrity, transparency, equity, and respect for students and fellow professionals.*" Furthermore, Cherry may also want to consider that Article II. A. states, "*We believe that admission practices should be student-centered and should not be designed to manipulate students into applying to or enrolling at a college or university before they are ready.*"

Before changing Mango's status, Cherry and her colleagues should consider what resources are available at CDU to help Mango thrive. Cherry could consult with Admission leadership and other key stakeholders (the Office of the Registrar, Academic & Tutoring Services, etc.) to review the university's policies and expectations for incoming students. Cherry and her colleagues should also consider the ethical implications of bringing a student to campus who may not be prepared for the academic rigor of Cookie Dough University's courses. A few possible pathways include:

- If the university has been clear and the student's performance caused admission to be in jeopardy, then Cherry might consider the ethics of rescinding an offer. She would want to work with other offices on campus to explore the issues and consider options. For example, could the university offer an opportunity for grade redemption or guaranteed transfer?
- If the university has not clearly stated a threshold or expectation, would the admission office be acting transparently and honestly by rescinding admission? If not, what other options (academic tutoring, success strategies sessions, etc.) could the university pursue to help this student's transition to CDU?
- If there is gray area, such as Cookie Dough University employing holistic application review to consider extenuating factors affecting an academic record, Cherry may want to communicate with Mango's college counselor or Mango herself to seek additional context about the change in performance. In these conversations, if recension is on the table, Cherry should be transparent about this possibility.

By following GEPCA guidelines and working within the outlined core values, Cherry and her colleagues will hopefully be able to put their heads together and help Mango work toward the cherry on top of her academic career: a diploma from Cookie Dough University!

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*If you have any questions feedback, or proposals for future Ethical Navigations, please contact [info@pcacac.org](mailto: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.*