

June 2024 Ethical Navigation: Summer Decisions

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:

With graduation “in the books,” Summer, the college counselor at Breakshere School, is wrapping up the school year. The seniors going to college seem eager for the next step, and Summer is excited for them. While preparing to send final transcripts to colleges, Summer hears the “new mail” chime on the computer.

Quickly, Summer scans the e-mail which reads, “Hi. Great news! Hot Beach University just sent me an e-mail offering an additional \$10k scholarship per year. I know I had planned to attend Breezy Mountain College, but this additional scholarship has me re-thinking my plans. HB has given me two weeks to decide. Can we meet before you go on summer break?”

With great care for students, Summer readily agrees to meet later in the week. What ethical issues should Summer consider as the student seeks guidance?

Possible approaches:

With the delays from FAFSA, college concerns about enrolling a class, and the post-DOJ Guide from NACAC, counselors might want to be prepared for more summer offers of admission/scholarship. In light of this, *GEPCA* still provides advice on suggested best practices that can help Summer with advisement in this situation.

First, the core value of Education should be considered. According to the Guide, “*We believe in and are committed to educating students, families, the public, fellow education professionals, and ourselves about the transition to and within postsecondary education.*” Thus, Summer should be prepared to educate the student and their family that these offers could occur and encourage the student to continue to consider the entire fit to college, of which cost is just one factor. This value specifically ties into Article 1. B. 1. a). which reads, “*To provide college admission counseling in the best interest of students, members should: provide guidance, information, and exposure to help students determine their best academic, personal, and financial college match.*”

Furthermore, Article 1. B. 1. b. iii.). explains, “*To provide college admission counseling in the best interest of students, members should: Educate students and families of their ethical responsibilities in the admission process, including counseling students that it is unethical to maintain an active enrollment deposit or the equivalent at more than one US college.*”

Thus, Summer could meet with the student to hear about the offer and discuss the student’s goals and important factors. This conversation may also include a financial analysis to determine the total cost of attendance at both institutions. During this meeting, Summer could advise the student that it is appropriate to keep the Breezy Mountain commitment while determining the next steps. Summer might even encourage the student to let BMC know that the scholarship offer had been made and inquire about the possibility of appealing scholarship/aid. If the student decides to change schools to attend Hot Beach U, Summer would want to advise the student to immediately withdraw from Breezy Mountain so the student would have only one active enrollment.

Addendum:

Because of the timing, an additional issue about final school transcripts might arise. As part of final school-year duties, Summer typically sends a final transcript to each student's college of choice—in this case, Breezy Mountain College. But, what if the student asks for an additional transcript to also be sent to Hot Beach University?

This situation seems similar to late waitlist movement. What would Summer do if a student was admitted off a waitlist after sending an initial final transcript to another school? According to Article II. B e). "*Colleges should notify all wait list candidates of the final decision no later than August 1*" so late waitlist movement, particularly this year, is possible. Having a school policy for final transcripts could help direct Summer. For example, to encourage students to have only one active enrollment, the Breakshere School might have developed a policy to send only one final transcript. Given the changes in college admission, Summer might want to work with the administration to make sure this policy has a way to adapt to enrollment changes during the summer.

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.