

May 2024 Ethical Navigation: Use the (GEPCA) Force To Lead the Way

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:

Amidst the swirling cosmos of academia, Vice Admiral Holdo, Director of Admissions at Resistance University (RU), faces a weighty dilemma. Word has reached her via social media that an incoming student attending Starlight Academy may have been involved in a concerning situation at the student's school, Starlight Academy. This issue has not been officially reported or communicated to Resistance University. Complicating matters, the student has already deposited to RU and the national commitment deadline at other institutions has passed.

What could Vice Admiral Holdo do? In hopes of finding a direction, Vice Admiral Holdo refers to NACAC's Guide for Ethical Practice in College Admissions.

Possible approaches:

In this galactic conundrum, Vice Admiral Holdo must tread carefully to balance the principles of fairness, transparency, and student privacy with the best interests of the student and the university. Here are some principles that might help the admiral:

In Article IC., the Guide states, "*Confidentiality: Guiding Principles and Rationale*. The college admission and counseling community depends on mutual trust. An important component in building this trust is maintaining confidentiality." **Section 1a**, highlights, "Members should send and receive information about candidates in confidence and strive to protect that confidentiality."

- With this guidance, Vice Admiral Holdo might decide to check Starlight Academy's profile and transcript to understand the school's discipline reporting policy. According to **Article 1. A. 1.n.vi**, "Secondary Schools should describe on their school's transcript or school profile policies for reporting disciplinary infractions." Thus, if the school reports discipline, Vice Admiral Holdo could reach out to Cassian Andor, the Director of College Counseling at Starlight Academy, to inquire about the incident and any possible discipline.
- During the ensuing conversation, Captain Andor might be able to provide valuable insight and guidance to Vice Admiral Holdo as they navigate the delicate situation involving the student and their actions. The two could then work together to gather information, assess the situation, and determine the best course of action that aligns with both institutions' principles and priorities.

In Article 1B. The Guide reads, "*Professional Conduct: Guiding Principles and Rationale*. Advocating for students' best interest in the admission process is the primary ethical concern of our members. This requires that students receive college admission counseling they can trust. Conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived, and unprofessional conduct undermine that trust. NACAC member institutions, organizations, and agencies should work together in an environment that fosters that trust." Furthermore, **Section 1b** outlines that "members should educate students and families of their ethical responsibilities in the admission process, including counseling students that it is

unethical to i). submit false, plagiarized, or fraudulent statements on applications or other documents.”

- In response to the conversation, Captain Andor could provide counseling and guidance to the student, offering assistance and resources to help them address the issue and make informed decisions about their academic future.
- To help this conversation, Captain Andor may refer to the student affirmations in the application. For example, if Resistance University uses the Common Application, a student’s second affirmation reads, “I agree to notify the institutions to which I am applying immediately should there be any change to the information requested in this application.” Thus, Captain Andor could review any supplemental questions that Resistance University asked on the Common Application. If RU asked about discipline, then Captain Andor should encourage the student meet the student’s affirmation by formally disclosing the disciplinary infraction to Resistance University.

Depending on the university policy, and once armed with a comprehensive understanding of the situation from Captain Andor and/or the student, Vice Admiral Holdo could assess the severity of the situation and its potential implications for the student's admission status. If the issue is minor and does not pose significant concerns regarding the student's character or ability to thrive within the RU community, Vice Admiral Holdo might be able to proceed with the admission process as planned. However, if the student’s actions are of a more serious nature, Vice Admiral Holdo might need to consult with other key university offices such as the Dean of Students or the disciplinary committee, Director of Housing, Campus Safety, etc. to determine the appropriate course of action.

Given the time-sensitive nature of the situation and the fact that the national commitment deadline has passed for other institutions, Vice Admiral Holdo might also consider the impact of potentially cancelling the student’s enrollment. Holdo should communicate promptly and transparently with the student, informing them of the disciplinary review process at RU and discussing any potential implications for their enrollment at Resistance University. Depending on the circumstances, Vice Admiral Holdo may explore various options. These could include: deferring the student's admission pending resolution of the discipline issue; providing conditional acceptance contingent upon satisfactory resolution; or advising the student on alternative pathways such as taking a gap year or exploring other educational opportunities should their enrollment be cancelled.

Throughout this process, Vice Admiral Holdo should uphold the principles of honesty, integrity, and respect for all involved parties. Holdo should try to ensure that the student is afforded due process and treated with fairness and dignity, while also safeguarding the reputation, community safety, and values of Resistance Academy. Ultimately, Vice Admiral Holdo's actions should be guided by a commitment to uphold the highest standards of ethical practice and ensure that the admissions process remains a beacon of integrity within the galaxy.

May the 4th be with the admissions team at Resistance University.

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.