

October 2025 Ethical Navigation: AI Spookiness

[The Potomac and Chesapeake Association for College Admission Counseling \(PCACAC\) Admission Practices Committee](#) is excited to present *Ethical Navigations*, an educational effort to proactively explore issues that might face professionals involved in the college admissions process. This month's Ethical Navigation was submitted by Jake Talmage, Director of College Counseling at St. Paul's School for Boys (MD).

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:

As school counselor Linus prepares for the Great Pumpkin and rapidly approaching November 1 deadline, he realizes that one of his students, Sally, has not been in recent contact. While he feels ghosted, Linus decides to invite Sally to stop by his office to check-in on her progress with applications.

After a few days, Sally stops by the office apologizing for being out of touch, but her pet beagle had been causing disruptions in the pumpkin patch. After catching up and making sure Sally was doing OK, Linus asks how Sally's college application, specifically the essay, is progressing.

After some squirming and avoidance, Sally blurts out, "Why does the essay even matter? All my colleges are just using AI to make their decisions."

Linus isn't surprised by this reaction. He knows there has been a lot of conversation about AI and how colleges are or are not using it in their review process. Then, of course, there is the mysterious student grapevine which often produces outrageous horror stories. Thus, Linus suggests that Sally reach out to the colleges to get information directly from the source, but she quickly refuses, saying, "They won't tell me. And I would not want to hurt my chances by accusing them!"

What can Linus do? Does NACAC's GEPCA provide any direction?

The Conundrum:

School counselors are often expected to know how colleges approach the application process. While details of the process can be veiled like a vampire's reflection in a mirror, counselors like Linus still need to provide relevant and helpful information to support students.

Possible approach:

Having attended NACAC's annual conference, Linus remembers that [GEPCA was updated this August](#). One of the new provisions specifically talks about Artificial Intelligence. Thus, Linus decides to see what it says.

According to the Guide, A. 1. e, "Truthfulness and Transparency... Members should: Promote ethical practices in relation to the use of artificial intelligence (AI). NACAC encourages continued learning and collaboration to ensure that any use of AI in counseling and admission aligns with our shared values of transparency, integrity, fairness, and respect for student dignity."

Seeing that the Guide encourages members to be transparent, Linus could also lean into the core values of Collaboration and Trust. He could contact several colleges to ask how they might be using AI in their admission process.

In this vein, Linus could ask Sally for her top 3-5 colleges, which happen to include Scooby Doo U, Casper College, and Frankenstein Institute. Once he has identified these colleges, Linus could contact the admission counselor assigned to his school or use the general admission office e-mail. In reaching out, Linus could explain he has a student interested but scared that the college is using AI to make decisions. Then, Linus could ask each admission office to explain how they are using AI and how it might impact the process.

By doing this, hopefully Linus can gather information to best counsel Sally and reduce her fear before the Great Pumpkin rises out of the pumpkin patch.

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.