

September 2025 Ethical Navigation: Dancing (and Independent Educational Counseling) in September

[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 Missy Evans-Moreland, Founder and President, Moreland & Associates Educational Consulting and Kathleen Voss, Regional Director of Admission from Georgia Tech.

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:

Emily Earth is a former admission officer and current Independent Educational Consultant (IEC). Late in the summer she was contacted and hired by the family of Wendy Wind. It is now early fall, and Emily is working with Wendy to advise on the college planning process. Wendy attends a large public high school, where Fiona Fire is the counselor.

During the initial conversation, Emily sees that a college on Wendy's list requires students to have 3 years of lab science. Wendy only has 2 years of lab science. Luckily, as school has only just begun, Wendy thinks that she could possibly add another science lab to her senior schedule.

The Conundrum:

R.D. Emily and other IEC's often find themselves in unique situations like the one above—they know including the School Counselor in the conversation could better support and educate the student, but different schools have varying policies on the use of independent counselors. A good practice for an IEC is to be proactive and ask about the school's collaboration policy up front.

While Emily is familiar with the high school curriculum, she is uncomfortable assuming Wendy Wind can change her senior schedule. She also knows that as it is still early in the school year, the school counselor, Fiona Fire, has not had a chance to sit down with Wendy and her parents to discuss the college process. If they don't act soon and make the change Wendy may not be competitive at one of the colleges she is applying to. How can an Independent Counselor help support the student and the school?

Possible approach:

NACAC Guide's Core Values include several themes which can help Emily:

- Education: We believe in and are committed to educating students, their families, the public, fellow education professionals, and ourselves about the transition to and within postsecondary education.
- Collegiality: We believe members should conduct dialogue with openness to differences, listening to various perspectives from a place of support and understanding. Members should strive to disagree without being abusive or demeaning.
- Trust: We believe our profession is based upon trust, and honesty with one another and with our students.

More specifically, as a member of PCACAC and frequent reader of Ethical Navigations, Emily knows that Section 1.A.1 of the GEPCA, states, *“Truthfulness and Transparency: Guiding Principles and Rationale: Members should provide comprehensive, truthful, and factual information that will allow all parties to make informed decisions...”*

Furthermore, if she is a member of the Independent Educational Consultants Association (IECA) Emily might also refer to those [Principles of Good Practice](#).

Thus, having had previous experience in college admission and now as a seasoned IEC, Emily believes that it is important for her to clarify her position from the get-go. She had already shared with Wendy and her parents that her role complements—not replaces—the school counselor's role. In addition, Emily believes that transparency builds trust, prevents confusion, and reduces stress. But, at the end of the day, Emily also knows that all parties will need to defer to the school counselor and the school's policy; she explains that to Wendy and her parents.

Since Emily is unsure about the high school's policy concerning adding a class in early September, she encourages Wendy to take the lead by emailing Fiona Fire asking about the possibility of adding a lab science with the rationale. As some students need extra support or guidance, Emily could offer to help draft or proofread the e-mail. To further foster collegiality and professionalism, she also suggests that the Winds could offer to meet virtually with Ms. Fire to discuss Wendy's college plans.

In this scenario, Emily models ethical practice by:

- **Centering student well-being and ownership of the process,**
- **Defining roles and responsibilities** transparently,
- **Respecting the counselor's institutional authority, and**
- **Engaging in collegial collaboration** rather than competition.

By adhering to these standards, Emily could ensure that Wendy will receive coordinated, consistent guidance—strengthening trust with families, counselors, and the broader admissions community.

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.