

September 2023 Ethical Navigation: Enthusiastic New Admission Officer

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 navigation is submitted by Jake Talmage, College Counseling Director at St. Paul's School for Boys.

This month's scenario: While preparing a table at a college fair, Rily from Regional University is pleased to meet a newly hired Neighboring College admission counselor, Eager, who has been assigned the table across the aisle. As they both prepare for the fair to open, Rily is delighted to see Eager's enthusiasm and energy. During their casual discussion, Eager expresses some nervousness as this is their first college fair, but they are excited to represent their alma mater. Rily assures Eager that everything will be OK and just to answer questions as best they can.

As the fair commences, Rily overhears several snippets of conversation. For example, when a family approaches Eager and asks about school spirit, Eager says, "Our spirit is great! Much better than at our rival, Crosstown College. They get no one to attend their basketball games." And later, "Well, all these colleges are great, but I wouldn't bother talking to Crosstown College." These statements make Rily uncomfortable. What could they do?

Possible approaches: While NACAC is not in the business of enforcement, the organization's [Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission](#) could provide an important opportunity for discussion in this situation. This conversation could help develop a valuable professional relationship.

For example, one approach Rily could take is to casually check-in with Eager by asking, "What did you think of your first fair?" In the ensuing conversation, Rily could ask Eager if they had heard of NACAC and/or the Guide. Rily could even mention one of our profession's core values is professionalism. They could suggest that Eager check out the Guide.

If Rily wanted to be more specific, they could mention that there is a line about talking negatively about other colleges. Specifically, in section *B. Professional Conduct: Guiding Principles and Rationale*, the Guide states, "To maintain a culture of collaboration and collegiality, members should not disseminate inaccurate, misleading or disparaging information about other secondary schools, colleges, organizations, or individual professionals."

Across the college admission landscape, we are seeing a lot of turn over. We also know many new professionals are looking for direction and inclusion. By taking this approach, Rily might help Eager develop as a college admission officer while also starting a casual mentorship. Many experienced NACAC colleagues fondly remember early career advice from seasoned professionals. NACAC members often say that one of the most important aspects of membership is building relationships, and this is an opportunity.

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.