

September 2024 Ethical Navigation: First College Fair

The Potomac and Chesapeake Association for College Admission Counseling (PCACAC) 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 Kathleen Voss, Regional Director of Admission for New England and Mid-Atlantic for Georgia Institute of Technology.

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:

New admission counselor, Leif Maple, runs into the giant convention center, dodging and weaving past the hundreds of high schoolers who have gathered to attend the Apple State College Fair. This is his inaugural travel season for his alma mater, and he underestimated the time it would take to grab a pumpkin spice latte AND get through the busy rush hour. He is running 10 minutes late to the very first event on his very busy travel schedule!

Leif finally finds his table as the kids are filing in. He unpacks the materials that he has brought with him to distribute to the students: cheerful search pieces and viewbooks, some pens and about 25 T-shirts and hats that he found in the supply closet back at the office. After setting up, Leif takes a seat behind his table and puts his feet up. "I sure am glad that I wore shorts today!" He thinks. "It's going to be a hot one for September!"

Seasoned Assistant Director, Autumn from Harvest College, is at the table across from Leif. She had seen him race in as the fair was starting and recognized him immediately as a new rep. She knows that to succeed in his new career, Leif is going to need some advice and guidance, but Autumn does not want to come across as being pushy. How can Autumn help Leif become a better admission professional? Are there any tools that she could share with him?

Possible approach:

After the fair, Autumn could introduce herself to Leif. During the ensuing conversation, she could share that during her first year in admission, her director encouraged her to participate in the [Ann Powell Mentor Program](#). This program is available to PCACAC members who *have less than 5 years of experience and who are seeking insight and reflection to enhance their daily responsibilities* as admission and school counseling professionals. Leif can find more information about the mentor program on the PCACAC website and then speak with his supervisor about joining. Many other regional affiliates have similar programs.

Autumn might also refer to the [Exhibitor Guidelines](#) put forth by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) which can provide good guidelines for professional expectations at a fair. If he had read the Guidelines prior to the Apple State Fair, he would have known to arrive a 1/2 hour early to the program, He also would have realized that while it is critical to hand out literature and ok to hand out pens, the distribution of some promotional items like water bottles, t-shirts, hats, candy etc. is prohibited by NACAC. He also would have recognized that professional attire is recommended for exhibitors. Autumn also shares that it is best practice to engage students in a mature and proficient way.

Finally, Autumn could direct Leif to NACAC's Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission, also known as GEPCA or "the Guide." Autumn can add that *GEPCA is the conscience of our profession. GEPCA is intended to state what NACAC members believe are the best ethical practices for conducting the admission process.* One of the 7 core values found in the Guide is *Professionalism*.

In Article I. Section B, we learn about *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.*

Leif thanks Autumn for her help and concern and feels empowered to begin the first of what he hopes are many, successful travel seasons!

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.