

Apperson Award 2026

Greetings and salutations everyone! Before I present the award, I want to thank all of the first timers for being here. I remember I was once in your shoes having no idea what these awards meant. All I knew was the awards themselves, and the people were meant to be respected. And while equally intentionally listening, also secretly hoping their speech would wrap so that I could stop squatting and shaking while taking their photos. Now fast forward here I am presenting an award.

So here is a breakdown. The Richard L. Apperson Award, named in honor of PCACAC's first president, is the association's highest honor presented to a PCACAC member. It is awarded annually to a member whose career embodies the ideals of the association - providing extraordinary service to students, to PCACAC, and to the college counseling profession.

“Dependable and kind team player”

“Vocal and strong advocate”

“There for the team”

“Students first always”

“Someone who you can trust when trust is most important”

“Tall”

These are the responses I received when I randomly asked many of you listening today to share one short phrase to describe this year's Apperson Award recipient. I'll say it once again. The Apperson Award is our association's highest honor, given to a professional who, in every way, embodies how we should approach this work in Admissions. Extraordinary service. Service to students. Service to families. Service to fellow professionals. And most importantly, service to the mission of providing equitable access to the world we aspire to have.

The running line when you enter this profession is two years or a lifetime, and for this year's Apperson recipient, he appears to have taken that quite literally. A look at his resume shows 17 years in the field, built step by step up the title ladder to now, rightfully, Dean of Admissions, often in the form of twos. And for someone who is quoted to have said, “I didn't really understand the job or the field of higher education,”

when reflecting on when he started the work, he has taken what began as uncertainty and turned it into a career defined by purpose, impact, and heart.

Apart from being a great example of an Admissions leader you can point to when telling students, “I promise the people reading your application are normal just like you,” and not just because of his ability to somehow make the flyest pair of J’s look professional, this year’s Apperson recipient has always used a people-first approach to guide every decision, every conversation, and every opportunity to serve.

Whether leading admissions at X University during moments of both celebration and scrutiny, supporting students navigating an increasingly complex and often politicized landscape, or standing firm when the work and the values behind it came under national attention, he has led with clarity and integrity. Not to mention, this year’s recipient has always been willing to give a helping hand in this association. From serving repeatedly as Summer Institute faculty, to being a consistent presenter at NACAC and PCACAC conferences, to chairing the Inclusion, Access, and Success Committee, and yes, encouraging young professionals to get involved, even if it’s by subtly convincing them that one day they too might travel internationally for free with Johnnie Johnson, he has made a lasting impact on this community.

No matter what is thrown his way he does not seem to retreat from the mission. Instead, he reinforces it by centering fairness, transparency, and access, and by reminding all of us that this work is ultimately about people, not professional politics. He has built trust in spaces where it is often hard to find. He has advocated when it would have been easier to stay silent. And he has consistently shown that leadership in Admissions is not about position or title, but about the daily choices we make to center humanity in a process that can so easily lose it. He understands that this work is not just about shaping a class, it is about shaping lives.

So, when we think back to those phrases I shared at the beginning, all describing a mentor, advocate, leader, and most of all, friend, it becomes clear they are not just words used to describe him. They are snapshots not only of what he has said, not only of what he has done, but most importantly, as the late great Maya Angelou said one will always remember- of how he has made people feel.

And without further ado, on behalf of the Leadership Team, it is my absolute honor to introduce this year’s Apperson Award recipient, Dean of Admissions at Johns Hopkins University, Calvin Wise.

Written by: Carla Goodwin