



# INTERNATIONAL

# ACAC

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING

## **International ACAC Hosts First Regional Institute on African Continent**

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The International Association for College Admission Counseling partnered with Brookhouse School to host the 2016 Africa Regional Institute, its first college counseling and international admission conference on the continent of Africa. More than 140 higher education professionals gathered in Nairobi to build the insights and connections best needed to advise students seeking international education opportunities.

The Institute focused on two professional development streams: 1) assisting secondary schools in the region with enhancing and developing their college counseling and guidance programs and 2) providing university admission offices with recruitment strategies and an understanding of African student mobility.

145 participants from 30 different countries attended the three-day event. Of those attendees, 76 were high school or college access counselors from 21 unique African countries. As this was International ACAC's first regional institute on the continent, many of these counselors had never taken part in this type of a professional development conference. On the university side, nine countries sent representatives from 35 institutions. From the United States and Canada to the UK and France, students and counselors were presented with a range of diverse and appealing options.

The Institute officially commenced on Thursday evening with welcoming remarks from International ACAC's VP Communications and Chair of the Organizing Committee, Aaron Andersen. During this time, he welcomed the new members from Africa and highlighted the importance of their participation within the organization. *"The learning doesn't stop on Saturday, we will make sure that you are connected with our association into the future. And our association needs you,"* said Andersen, *"We need your voice, the voice of Africa, in our conversations."*

The Institute program was split into two streams, each with a specific theme, and consisting of sessions that encouraged attendees to both develop skills and identify

resources. The theme for high schools and organizations was “Building an Application Tool-Kit,” while the theme for colleges and universities was “Making the Case for Africa.” Session topics included standardized testing, recruitment strategies, differences in application systems by country, accessing financial assistance, and exploring the regional demographic trends.

In addition to the educational sessions, a highlight for many conference goers was the structured networking. Through “speed meetings” or “topics for discussion,” participants were put into small groups with a specific talking point. When 6-8 minutes had elapsed, the participants shuffled tables, effectively ensuring one-on-one discussions with nearly everyone at the Institute. Attendees, many of whom had never been to a conference of this size, commented on the ease of networking and continuing conversations through this activity.

Working toward ways to expand to reach new high schools throughout the region, International ACAC was able to provide \$25,000 worth of travel grants to counselors across the continent. By assisting with their transportation, accommodation, or registration fees, this funding allowed 32 more professionals to participate in the conference. Counselor Emily King from Harare, Zimbabwe commented, *“It was wonderful to meet so many like-minded people and learn so much in such a short period. Incredibly well organised and executed.”*

The Institute closed with a university fair, open to students at neighboring schools in Nairobi. Set up like a trade show, university representatives spent two hours answering questions from prospective students and promoting their colleges and universities. Despite being held on the Saturday of a holiday weekend, attendance was strong. An estimated 350 students and parents attended the Brookhouse School event.

Overall, participants had positive reviews and comments regarding the Institute, with several requesting a repeat event in the future. As one representative from a US university put it, *“This was the best conference I've attended. The passion for Africa among the participants was remarkable. The conference affirmed my work is not only important but critical for the future. Excited to have been part of a group of colleagues who are collaborating together to make a difference in so many lives.”*

International ACAC has already made a commitment to host regional institutes in East Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America in the coming year. For more information about these events, and to relive highlights from the 2016 Africa Regional Institute, please visit [www.internationalacac.org](http://www.internationalacac.org).