

## Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**Name:** Isthier Chaudhury  
**Title:** Senior Associate Director of International Admissions  
**Institution:** Trinity College  
**Location/Region:** United States/Canada & U.S.  
**Member Group:** Post-Secondary (Higher Education)

## Background and Experience

**Years of experience in post-secondary admissions counseling or related fields?**

8-10 years

**Please describe any professional or volunteer experience you feel would be relevant for serving on the International ACAC Executive Board. If you do not have any previous board or committee experience, please tell us the attributes you possess that would make you qualified to serve on the International ACAC Board.**

My entire career has been centered around international admissions since beginning in 2013. As a continual member of Intl ACAC, I was part of the planning committee for the 2017 East Asia Regional Institute and was a member of the Membership Committee from 2018 to 2021. I have three years of experience as co-chair of the Events and Communications Committee for China ICAC, helping to plan an annual conference and several events throughout the year to bridge the Chinese college counseling community and their students with admissions professionals around the world. While I am still responsible for overseeing international admissions at Trinity College, my role has recently evolved to coordinate and oversee our office's DEI initiatives. This has come from conversations and a belief on our team that DEI initiatives and international admissions are not mutually exclusive. International students are one of many groups that add diversity and vibrancy to our campuses, but there are also different conversations about equity and inclusion that need to happen to better serve our international populations. I have been thoughtful about choosing my commitments so I may balance my time and deliver my best to whatever group I join. My involvement so far has provided me with experience understanding organizational policies and practices, planning events, raising important (and even difficult) questions in decision-making conversations, and gaining buy-in from individual and organizational collaborators.

**Please describe how you have engaged in the international community, and the impact this has had on your professional life. Be sure to list any contributions you have made, including participation and leadership in International ACAC annual conferences, regional institutes and webinars, sessions you have led, panels you have moderated, or volunteer activities within the organization. Describe any International ACAC Committee experience you**

**have. Did you start any initiative or display any leadership qualities while serving on the committee?**

Starting within the institutions where I work, I bring the voice and perspective of international service beyond admissions and into cross-departmental committees. In my volunteering, I have had the privilege of learning from colleagues around the world as we've built presentations or events. For the 2017 Intl ACAC East Asia Regional Institute, I had a lead role in organizing the college fair for the event, in addition to helping coordinate breakout conversation groups. I had the opportunity at the 2019 Intl ACAC summer conference to be a first-timer mentor. I have proposed and led one session at an Intl ACAC summer conference, in addition to joining numerous other panels or presentations over the years. As I have been encouraged to become more involved in the organization by colleagues, I try to pay it forward and regularly support others newer to the organization to become more involved and share what they know. I have served on the Membership Committee and contributed time to membership data analysis and application review. While my learning and volunteering with Intl ACAC has allowed me to better serve as a professional, I have also seen where our community sometimes needs self-examination and improvement. I believe in diverse leadership to best represent our global community. I also believe in holding ourselves accountable with conversations about racism, bias, and inclusion that really have yet to permeate the deepest corners of international admissions work.

**Please describe your affiliation with NACAC, if any. How long have you been a member of NACAC? Do you have any volunteer or committee work or experience with NACAC?**

I have been a member of NACAC since 2013. So far, I have not had the opportunity to serve as a volunteer or on a committee with NACAC.

**Do you anticipate a change in your position or employer over the next year?** No

## **VP DEI Specific Questions**

**What DEI initiatives have you led or been involved in over the last two years. Please be specific about the impact of your involvement.**

Throughout my time in international admissions, I have been privileged to serve in offices that placed an emphasis on engagement with international students and communities that were underrepresented or underserved in the global college access process. This has meant regular in-person travel or virtual engagement to deliver a variety of workshops on the college search process with partners such as EducationUSA and their Opportunity Scholars programs. I also believe inclusion means inviting engagement from students and schools that do not necessarily conform to Western ideals or pedagogy. In day-to-day work, this means incorporating local and national schools around the world in recruitment and education activities. I have also served on ChinalCAC for the past three years as part of a broader mission to provide Chinese-language college counseling training and networking opportunities to counselors in China. This enables outreach to students and engagement with schools outside major cities or that have well-resourced college counseling offices. This ultimately provides students and families with a

better understanding of their options in their international college search process. Finally, I have taken the initiative on my own campus to start conversations about DEI related to our international students. When there was targeted violence against Asian women in the US this past spring, I was part of a faculty and staff group initiating outreach to students and raising awareness about challenges facing our Asian and Asian-American communities. I have also taken the lead in bringing campus partners together in regular conversations on how we can be more inclusive of international students in our campus experience and processes. My professional responsibilities have recently evolved to include oversight of our DEI initiatives across the admissions office, no longer perpetuating silos between international and traditionally “domestic” multicultural or DEI recruitment initiatives.

**Please describe any ideas you have for the future direction of this position, or specific initiatives you would like to develop. This may include this specific position, or may be in collaboration with another Vice President. Be as detailed as possible.**

A priority for this position needs to be expanding our conversations about DEI so they are not dominated by challenges and current events in the United States. There are systems of power and privilege around the world which exclude and disadvantage different students in different ways. We should encourage examination of those systems by our members within their respective communities, and support their advocacy for change when possible. Most importantly, any activity or conversation should start with goals and end with actionable lessons or next steps to address a challenge or problem.

Possible initiatives to develop more international DEI narratives in our IACAC community:

- Topical, affinity group, or safe space conversations that happen on a regular basis (Quarterly? Bi-monthly?). These can aim to address challenges in certain regions of the world or allow members to find allies in their own missions to break down systemic exclusion, racism, and sexism.
- Highlights of innovative inclusive admissions or college counseling practices through our blog and social media.
- An international DEI book club – encourage people to educate themselves about a perspective that is not their own and not dominant in their sphere of work. Invite related community speakers or authors as available and affordable to speak on their work and experience.
- Openly monitor and report on our community’s sentiment about whether we are making progress toward a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community, to help hold the Executive Board accountable to this mission.
- In conjunction with the Membership Committee, working on targeted recruitment efforts to diversify representation in our community.-Expanding mentorship efforts with the Professional Development Committee to create mentoring communities specifically for those who identify with different underrepresented groups in the profession.

**Part of this position is managing people, committees, and projects. What is your experience in this area? Describe your management style. How do you like to be managed?**

My priority as a manager is to build trust, set goals as a team, and allow team members the autonomy to complete their work however they see fit, within the framework of organizational

needs and rules. I prefer meetings to be less focused on updates, and instead use time together to solve problems or come up with new ideas. As part of trust-building, I expect team members to open provide me with critical feedback for needed change or improvement, and expect others to be open to feedback as well, which ultimately allows us to do better as individuals and a team. I have had team or project management responsibilities throughout my career in admissions, with my responsibilities being elevated to managing full-time staff members in 2017. In my current role, I am managing two critical teams – Global Enrollment and Admissions Operations. In my spare time, I read a non-trivial amount about leadership development and how to be a better manager so that my team members experience personal growth and professional development from their jobs. I expect from the same from my managers that I expect from my teams – open communication, trust, and a willingness to provide feedback. I believe the most effective managers are not really managing their people – they are coaching and developing their staff, helping remove obstacles to effective work, and empowering team members to make decisions and experiment with new ideas.

**How would you advance the conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion within International ACAC? How do you believe the Executive Board should function in this capacity?**

I think the priorities in current conversations around diversity and inclusion are often guided by the media and dominated by Western perspectives. Part of this makes sense for our organization, and we have to serve a large part of our constituency that is entering the conversation from this space. However, racism, bias, and privilege manifest in different ways around the world, and we may not even recognize problems we have to address because international issues of concern can be so far removed from mainstream conversation. The legacy of colonialism. Aspirational Westernism among non-Western cultures. Racism and classism within cultures and countries deemed more “homogenous” by outsiders. Religious conflict, oppression, and suppression. Perceived “over-representation” of certain groups within committees or membership. Racism between people of color. These are just a few examples of topics that don’t quite fit into diversity and inclusion conversations in the US right now. The conversation that is happening around Black Lives Matter and systemic racism in the US absolutely needs to continue happening, but many of us in Intl ACAC don’t fit the figurative and literal shades of black, brown, or white that would allow us to best find our seat at the table. As an Executive Board, we need to consent to learn in public (credit to Dr. Adrienne Keene) and demonstrate that our commitment to DEI goes beyond statements and trainings. When we do learn something, how do we acknowledge our previous mistakes or implement our learning? What is our commitment to continued and ongoing learning, and even immersion, so that we might better serve and include people with backgrounds different from our own? In addition, we need to hold ourselves accountable and push members to discuss and explore solutions to our toughest international problems. This is because there is no other force holding us accountable for these conversations. The same way our international community is often an afterthought in larger organizations and institutions, we ourselves take advantage of this and avoid reflection on how we unconsciously disadvantage segments of the international community.

## Statement to Members

**Please provide a maximum 250-word statement of why you wish to run for the International ACAC Board, and other relevant information you would like members to know about you that you have not previously shared in this application. Your statement will be shared with the general membership if you are slated for this position.**

International students do not just bring diversity to our communities – the communities they come from are diverse in their own right. There are debates about equity in serving “domestic” and “international” students, but less often do we explore differences in privilege and access within our international community. Outsiders paint international college counseling and admissions as an untouchable monolith of complexity, but our community has used that façade to escape difficult conversations as colonial powers faced “domestic” reckonings with racial justice. Let’s change the idea that there is merely an “intersection” between DEI work and serving international students. Valuing DEI is an ethos with which we choose to do our work, not a bubble of operations that exists in an “international” or “domestic” sphere. By working in international education, we have chosen to champion DEI, and it is our responsibility to educate ourselves and advocate for all who do not have the power to change systems that discriminate and oppress. I am excited to run for VP of DEI because it extends the evolution of my job this past year. From working mainly with international admissions, my new role now also oversees all DEI initiatives in my admissions office. We no longer separate “international” from our DEI conversations. Instead, we allow for the rich intersectionality between different identities of nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, institutions... I look forward to learning in public with you all, as we build an understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion as values without borders.