



2024 Executive Board Election Candidate

Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Name: Aileen Lee

Title: Upper School Vice Principal of Academics

Institution: Canadian International School of Hong Kong

Location/Region: Hong Kong/East Asia

Member Group: Secondary (High School)

All Applicant Questions

Discuss your involvement with International ACAC, highlighting specific roles (with dates) and contributions made during your volunteer or leadership tenure.

As a member of the Organization Restructuring Ad Hoc Committee (2023), I have been part of a team dedicated to restructuring and improving the organization's governance and operational structure. Through my involvement in this committee, I have contributed proposals to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. In 2022, I served as a member of the GNC where I played a crucial role in identifying and selecting qualified individuals for leadership positions. I was also in the Conference Session Proposal Committee from 2022-2023 where the team had to evaluate and select a diverse group of proposals for the conference. My involvement with the DEI Committee from 2022 to present provides me a clear understanding of the development and implementation of initiatives that promote DEI. I have also served as a mentor in the Mentorship program from 2021 to 2023, providing guidance and support to college counselors. I am proud to have been a recipient of the Opportunity Grant in both 2021 and 2022. This grant has allowed me to further my professional development and enrich the life of refugee students

who received support in their college application journey. Lastly, I am honored to have received the Rising Star Award in 2020, which recognizes my dedication and impact in the field of college counseling. This award serves as a testament to my commitment to excellence and my contributions to the profession.

Identify and articulate a critical issue in college admissions for international students that you would like to or have championed, emphasizing its importance and potential impact on the community.

I am passionate about promoting access to higher education especially for those from marginalized backgrounds. International students bring diverse perspectives, enriching the learning environment. However, they face barriers like finances, language proficiency, and limited knowledge of the college application process. One achievement was establishing a refugee scholarship. Despite institutional resistance, I brought the first high school-aged Syrian refugee to China. I created selection criteria, led the process in Amman, and addressed concerns from teachers. Through collaboration, we created learning communities. With advocacy and mentoring, our students received a full scholarship at Northwestern University. I received an award from International ACAC and an opportunity grant for this work. I believe in breaking barriers regardless of gender, age, race, or socioeconomic status. Providing access to higher education for international students transforms individuals and communities, empowering them to pursue their dreams and make an impact. It invests in future leaders and challenges systemic biases. By advocating and implementing initiatives, we create an inclusive and equitable college admissions process. Promoting access aligns with social justice, ensuring educational opportunities for all. It has a profound impact, creating a globally-minded society. I am dedicated to continuing this work and supporting international students in their pursuit of higher education.

Detail additional experiences that have equipped you with skills and insights applicable to the position you're applying for, emphasizing transferable accomplishments.

My volunteer roles as a Fierce Females Event Manager for the Beijing Women's Network, Global Selections Committee Member at UWC, and board experience has further equipped me with valuable skills and insights. I enjoy curating and organizing events and programs featuring experts from various industries who can spark conversations on prevalent issues, particularly those affecting minority voices. These roles have allowed me to develop a deep understanding of

awareness, cultural competence, and effective communication styles. Through my work in finding and amplifying the voices of individuals from diverse backgrounds, I have honed my collaboration skills. It is essential to work with stakeholders to drive collective change. This experience has provided me with the ability to navigate resistance, engage stakeholders, and drive sustainable change. Change management is a critical aspect of leading. I have learned how to effectively navigate and manage resistance to change, ensuring that diverse perspectives are included and valued. Furthermore, my involvement in multiple organizations has given me exposure to a wide network of professionals. This network has provided me with valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. It has also allowed me to collaborate and learn from other passionate individuals in the field.

Outline your comprehension of the role you are applying for, specifying changes you'd like to implement while acknowledging current practices or programs you feel are effective.

I'd like to suggest assessing the current structure of the DEI committee. I believe that it would be helpful to have regional DEI committees in order to better understand how different countries conceptualize diversity. How do we better weave DEI into other committees and use it as a lens rather than a stand alone committee? We can develop a comprehensive framework that addresses the challenges and opportunities for progressing organizational change. This can include conducting regular assessments to identify gaps, implementing training programs to enhance intercultural competence and establishing clear guidelines and policies to ensure equitable practices throughout the organization. A recent example includes talk around transparency revolving compensation and publicizing salary ranges in job posts. I would like to enhance our communication strategies by adopting a multi-faceted approach, establishing regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys or focus groups that can provide valuable insights for continuous improvement and ensure that the diversity of voices is heard. We should take advantage of these situations to facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, exploring ways to reduce barriers to engagement, and enabling a more inclusive and participatory environment.

Describe your leadership philosophy and strategies for effectively managing and leading a volunteer committee, emphasizing communication, collaboration, and recognition.

I believe in incorporating servant leadership principles to effectively manage and lead a volunteer committee. Servant leadership is rooted in empathy, compassion, and a commitment to serving others. I would prioritize active listening to understand the perspectives, ideas, and needs of committee members. This creates a safe space for open communication. I would delegate tasks and responsibilities based on individual skills and interests, empowering committee members to take ownership of their roles, trusting their abilities and providing support when needed to foster a sense of empowerment. I would foster a collaborative and inclusive environment where diverse voices are valued. By creating opportunities for sharing and respecting different perspectives, we can tap into the collective wisdom of the team. It is necessary to prioritize the personal and professional development of committee members by providing resources, mentorship, and coaching. Achievements should be celebrated as recognition creates a positive and motivating atmosphere. I would ensure that all committee decisions and actions are guided by integrity, fairness, and ethical principles. Setting an example of ethical leadership inspires and empowers committee members. By incorporating servant leadership principles such as active listening, empowerment, collaboration, support, recognition, and ethical decision-making, I can effectively manage and lead a volunteer committee.

Explain how you would leverage the position to contribute to International ACAC's strategic plan, aligning your goals with the organization's three pillars: enhancing member experience globally, clarifying the international brand, and optimizing internal operations.

To enhance member experience globally, I would focus on increasing diversity and representation through developing regional subcommittees, and provide high touch service through better engagement initiatives. DEI has to be embedded into all of our practices. Establishing shared meaning, strategies, and structures for DEI within the organization involves revisiting and improving our DEI goals and accountabilities, as well as providing ongoing DEI training for the Executive Board, committees, and membership. By fostering a shared understanding of the value of DEI and providing the necessary resources, we can create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all members. In terms of clarifying the international brand, I would collaborate with the Executive Board and committees to review and revise organizational mission, values, principles, structures, and policies. This process would ensure that our goals and values are transparent, aligned, and effectively communicated to all stakeholders. By clarifying our brand, we can

strengthen our global reputation and attract diverse members who resonate with our mission. Lastly, to optimize internal operations, I would utilize the strengths identified in the DEI Assessment Final Report. This includes creating specific development and support opportunities for leaders and members to increase their DEI competence, as well as measuring the impact of our programs, policies, and practices in creating an open and inclusive environment.

Share details about a notable contribution you have made in the field, underscoring its impact on the profession and industry. Highlight specific initiatives, programs, or leadership roles that showcase your commitment and expertise.

I played a vital role in promoting access to higher education for refugees. I faced institutional resistance but persevered in bringing the first-ever high school-aged Syrian refugee to China. I developed admissions selection criteria and led the process with a team. This initiative enabled the student to access quality education and opened doors for other refugees to pursue their dreams. Recognizing my work in this area, International ACAC awarded me for my contributions to education with refugees as well as two opportunity grants. As a former Chief Strategy Officer, I have implemented robust counseling models that have had a significant impact on providing personalized and impactful university counseling support to various campuses within an education group. These models were designed to ensure that the counseling process followed best practices and maintained integrity, while also fostering clear expectations and effective communication between students, parents, counselors, and universities. I have been very fortunate to continue my involvement in the professional committees, speaking engagements, and various roles in reputable schools in a variety of roles, working to improve systems to help better serve students and institutions.

Share why you want to volunteer for a leadership role for International ACAC and why this particular position.

Int'l ACAC has provided me with many opportunities to grow both personally and professionally. As an Asian female leader in education, I strongly resonate with the importance of DEI and have witnessed firsthand the transformative power it holds. Throughout my career, I have dedicated myself to driving positive change and creating inclusive environments within educational settings. My personal experiences as a member of an underrepresented group have shaped my passion for DEI and I firmly believe in the need to create spaces that celebrate and empower

individuals from diverse backgrounds. The responsibilities outlined in the position description reflect the core of my professional expertise and personal values. Serving as the chairperson of the DEI Committee, I welcome the opportunity to educate counseling professionals about the importance of DEI work, promoting awareness and understanding. This aligns perfectly with my commitment to fostering a culture of inclusivity and social justice. I am committed to collaborating with committees and the larger organization to initiate and advocate for programs, policies, and practices. It is my personal mission to ensure that every individual feels a sense of belonging and has equal opportunities to thrive. The role of Vice President for DEI at International ACAC perfectly encapsulates my professional expertise and personal values.