



## 2024 Executive Board Election Candidate

### Representative to the Executive Board

**Name:** Andrew Palmer

**Title:** Director of High School Counseling and University Admissions

**Institution:** Seoul Foreign School

**Location/Region:** South Korea/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.**

I've been an active member of Int ACAC for the past six years, and my participation includes attendance at the annual Summer Conference held at Western and FIU, as well as active involvement in each virtual conference offering. I was unable to attend earlier conferences due to budgetary restrictions. Despite global challenges posed by Covid restrictions, I maximized my engagement through attending virtual opportunities, such as the previously titled "Webinar Wednesdays," and I was a session facilitator for the 2020 Virtual Conference - steering discussions on the theme of "balancing student privacy and student well-being during student transitions." I have also applied to be part of the pre-conference faculty for the 2024 Summer conference. Recognizing the significance of community service, I looked to contribute further by applying for the membership committee in 2019. Although I was unsuccessful, I persisted and successfully secured a position in 2021. Since then, I have been an active and impactful member, currently chairing the P&P sub-committee. In this capacity, I have spearheaded initiatives and supported eight

recent motions to the board. Additionally, I led the recent effort in drafting a survey aimed at gauging membership feedback on commissioned-based agents. Finally, I've been a consistent contributor to the Int. ACAC Facebook and WeChat groups, and I look forward to many future opportunities to serve the larger community.

**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.**

Having worked in comprehensive counseling models for my entire career, I can't separate the importance of social & emotional wellbeing from the role of supporting students in their post-secondary planning. Parents, schools, and students continue to pile enormous pressure on themselves to get into the "best" college or university – while often not realizing the importance of truly understanding how their strengths and passions connect to future pathways. In my opinion, it isn't so much about finding the highest ranked university to attend, but rather the larger focus needs to be on having genuine conversations with young people that affirm how their values relate to the future. This journey for our students is not a one-sized fits all process, but rather an individualized approach. The young people we serve are facing such huge challenges ahead (limited resources, financial challenges, cultural adjustments, increased applications, and DEIJ concerns such as - tackling bias, inequality, stereotypes, and racial discrimination). With all that weighing on their shoulders, I truly believe that the best thing we can do is to normalize that this process looks different for everyone, and that each individual brings their own unique strengths to the table. Whether they are maintaining top grades, or if they're struggling to get their grades above passing, they have personal importance and can pursue a meaningful post-secondary pathway - It's OUR role to help within this critical issue.

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

In my commitment to fostering collaborative opportunities among school-based counselors, university admission representatives, and community-based mental health providers, I developed the Jiangsu Counseling Network. The JCN successfully hosted annual events, advocating for connectivity and cooperation. At our last event in May 2023, we had over 100 participants in attendance from across China. The associated WeChat group, boasting 277 members, has become a vibrant

platform for continuous engagement. Additionally, I dedicated six years to the International School Counselor Association (ISCA), as leader on their "Task-Force" team. For a year and a half of that time, I chaired the "Membership & Advocacy Committee." Within this capacity, I actively contributed to ISCA's annual conferences by not only serving as a workshop presenter but also playing a key role in selecting pertinent workshops from the proposal list. Furthermore, I lent support to the logistical aspects of each conference. In supporting the return of college fairs to China in Fall of 2023, I worked to streamline information via an open-spreadsheet. Through this service, schools and universities were able to easily see dates and locations of events, as they planned for their Fall travel season. These experiences, coupled with my role as the former Director of Counseling at Dulwich College Suzhou, collectively underscore my ability to drive initiatives aligned with both local and organizational priorities.

**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 recognize the unique nature of this role, requiring a proactive approach to address diverse issues and support fellow board members. I understand this position is based in the importance of being able to be flexible to the needs of the group, to be supportive in collaborating with VP's, and to have the capacity to drive forward initiatives, such as ad-hoc responsibilities. In leveraging my experiences, I am extremely confident that I can be an asset in areas including Advocacy and Outreach, Professional Development, Communication, and Membership. Via serving in the largest committee in the organization (membership), I understand that this is volunteer work, and people have busy personal lives. That said, I've found the most rewarding times have been when I've been able to collaborate with others – both within the committee and elsewhere in the organization, such as the regional round-ups. I believe International ACAC has been doing an effective job in this area, and I hope to see continued formal & informal opportunities for member engagement. Social media platforms (Facebook and regional group chats) are a tremendous way to drive this kind of engagement forward. I appreciate that our community continues to grow in DEI initiatives. The organizational assessment and report is essential work in amplifying each member's voice, and I aim to leverage my membership committee insights to continue capturing all perspectives within our continued advancement as an organization.

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

I believe that people are most effective when they're able to apply their strengths to their personal interest areas. My approach to effectively leading volunteer work has always been to gather all stakeholder perspectives, provide opportunities to take ownership of particular areas of the work, model a servant leadership approach (meaning that I'll never ask someone else to do something that I'm not willing to do myself), and, where possible, absorb some of the responsibilities that no one else wants to take on. Within the Policies & Procedures Sub-Committee (and within my work as the Chair for the ISCA Membership and Advocacy committee), I believe anyone I served with would echo those sentiments. Additionally, I spent four years leading a volunteer collaboration group across the Education in Motion group of schools (including over 40 school counselors in more than 15 schools). During that time, we had a common vision to develop a shared idea of best practice while giving each member areas of focus, including online counseling provision, note-taking, curriculum development, parent engagement, and much more. I ensured that each member was able to have feedback into the larger group priorities and also had the ability to apply their individual skillset into focused tasks. Similar to my approach when supporting students, I believe acknowledging the individuality of the other people you work with is essential when helping to lead in a volunteer capacity.

**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.**

Recognizing the significance of small and regional forums, I advocate for their continued support as vital platforms for diverse stakeholder representation. These forums not only break down barriers to engagement, such as time zones and accessibility, but also facilitate inclusive dialogue. Building on this inclusivity, I support the development of organizational-specific certification programs, drawing inspiration from successful models like those implemented by NACAC and ISCA. Additionally, I would hope to utilize the role to support the continued evolution of our volunteer process, committee member selection procedures, and minimizing bias in the selection process. Where possible, middle-leadership/chair positions within committees are rewarding and have been successful, as demonstrated by

the membership committee - I'd like to see how this model could be further developed. Our mission, volunteers, website, and communication processes are essential in upholding the three pillars of the strategic plan. My personal approach centers on fostering transparency, inclusivity, and innovation within the organization. While I certainly will never pretend to have all the answers about how all of our goals are going to be accomplished, my passion, insights, and collaborative nature will help ensure that we continue to actively work towards our strategic pillars. I know without a doubt that Int ACAC will continue to remain at the forefront of supporting its diverse membership globally!

**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.**

Building on my response from question #3), I believe my most significant contributions to the profession have been around my hopes to build others up. I deeply care about people, and would think that any of my former colleagues would say that I've made a positive impact on those around me: students, parents, counselors, admissions officers, school leaders, etc. My targeted leadership efforts in International ACAC, ISCA, Education in Motion, China ICAC, and the Jiangsu Counseling Network – all demonstrate my commitment to serving the larger profession. Of all my experiences, I take particular joy in how the Jiangsu Counseling Network contributed to the professional community in China. Having worked with students of all ages, doing both social emotional counseling & university and careers counseling, I loved the chance to give people of different professional lenses, the opportunity to connect for a shared purpose. To see college admissions officers choosing to sit in an educational workshop on art therapy, and to have a local Chinese Psychologist engaging with universities about what mental health services are provided on campus – will forever bring my heart joy. While I'm no longer based in China, I'm in communication with other stakeholders about how the Jiangsu Counseling Network will continue to contribute to the larger counseling community for years to come.

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

My application will evidence my drive for personal and professional growth. I want to volunteer for the Representative to the Executive board role, because I believe

my good natured & purposeful approach will be complementary to the Presidential team, the VP's, the other Representatives, and to the organization as a whole. I say it any chance I get – I will never pretend to know all the answers. However, from a place of authenticity, I will work my very hardest to get to a place where we can collectively find answers. Whereas there is so much competition across universities and private secondary institutions, our profession is nothing short of magical - because we get to push beyond all of that noise. We are always better together, and my goal in this position will be to continue to propel initiatives and collaborative opportunities for the betterment of stakeholders in our community.