

Position: Delegate to the NACAC Assembly

Shilpa Gupta

Head of College Counseling

Neerja Modi School

India

Member Type: Secondary School

Background & Experience

Years of experience in college admissions counseling or related fields: 5-8 years

Previous professional or volunteer experience:

- a. Executive Board-International ACAC - Delegate to NACAC assembly: Was appointed as a delegate for one term and very excited to serve on the Board again. Having experienced this role for this term, I now feel more confident and ready to contribute to the Board as a member.
- b. Member – School Managing Committee: Member since the last 10 years and have been designated Vice Principal for the last 7 years. Responsible for recruiting faculty and staff according to institutional needs, resolving matters of concern among the student body and ensuring order within the school, advising high school students about college requirements, application procedures and providing related assistance, benchmarking and appraising past academic performance and consequently developing an appropriate academic policy and calendar to enhance it, and reaching out to and collaborating with schools worldwide to develop joint exchange programs.
- c. Planning committee member – IC3 conference (2016 onwards): Have served on the Planning committee for the last 4 years. Responsible for the organization and execution of the biggest college counseling conference of the country, budgeting of operations, inviting school principals and counselors, planning the venue and making arrangements, and assisting in agenda selection for committees.
- d. Finance Committee-working member – International ACAC: August 2018 - June 2019.
- e. Advisory board – CIALFO (Oct 2018 onwards): Responsible for advising Cialfo on feature upgrades that are essential for fulfilling the needs of the international counselor community and on overall strategy and direction that will best help its mission of democratizing access to college education, with a special focus on enabling greater access to college counseling. I am also involved in assisting them to create a presentation for setting up a college counseling office.
- f. Volunteer- Was a part of the pro bono team of counselors to support the students from Nepal whose scholarships were revoked by UT. Helped in successfully sending one student to a US university with a full scholarship.
- g. Scholar mentor: Serving as a mentor to one International ACAC scholar from Nepal.

International community engagement:

I am currently serving as a member of Executive board as a Delegate to NACAC assembly. Not only did I get to work with some awesome and experienced people in the industry, I also felt like I could get a different perspective on the table. With lots of thoughtful discussions and meaningful ideas, I was able to broaden my horizons and started to look at things with a different lens. It was a very comforting feeling, which I obviously share with my colleagues here, that there is this amazing group of people so concerned about access to resources , diversity and inclusion. I served as the South Asia Regional Institute Host co-ordinator and Planning Committee member in October 2018 to host the first ever institute in South Asia. I was in charge of the entire planning of the event and cultural activities around the same. My roles involved participation in weekly planning meetings with Lisa Hollett and Ken Dunbar to decide the faculty team, session topics, scholarship recipients, event schedule, welcome dinner and meals catering to all allergies. Communication with universities across the world and high schools in South Asia to promote the event which ended up having huge participation of 154 delegates. I was also involved in careful selection and consideration of the faculty presenting the sessions, session titles, IT support and its relevance to the audience. Having presented at International ACAC summer conferences and IC3 conferences for the last four years, I now have a clear perspective on the issues that need to be addressed and the complexity of the college admission process. Curating apt conference sessions and webinars that cater to the need of the community were also a major part of my roles .I was a working member of the Finance committee (August 2018 - June 2019) to review financial matters and advise the Executive Board on opportunities to create and manage matters relating to sponsorships, advertising, scholarship funds, and conference exhibitors.

NACAC affiliation:

I have been an enthusiastic member of NACAC since Oct 2015 and have attended 3 of its conferences (in San Diego, Boston and Louisville). I also serve as a Delegate to the NACAC assembly and did get to witness the assembly for the first time. This assembly was definitely a historic one with lots of amendments and harsh decisions to be taken .It was definitely overwhelming but I was really taken aback by the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes. These conferences were instrumental in giving me valuable insight into how NACAC's functioning enables it to fulfill its aim of easing students' transition from secondary to post-secondary education and increased my interest in contributing to it.

Delegate to the NACAC Assembly Specific Questions

Please list any relevant experience you have as a delegate, or in working with political assemblies. Also, if you have any relevant work with governance issues or with bylaws, be sure to mention those as well.

I am currently serving as a Delegate to the NACAC Assembly.

Each Delegate is assigned to work alongside a Vice President. Which area(s) would be most interested in and why? Describe your work style.

I would be interested in working with the Professional Development, Inclusion and Access or the Membership committee. I am a Vice Principal and head of college counseling with a track record of strategic and operational innovation and my first-hand academic programme knowledge includes IGCSE, A Level, IBDP, CBSE. I also established the college counseling office at my institution. As a manager, I strive to build an enthusiastic, strong 'team' at all levels where the sharing of good ideas is encouraged and solid support given where needed. Relevant and realistic aims and objectives are given to my staff to maintain focus and encourage good time management. I have a positive, inter-personal management style, and know when a measured degree of firmness is required. I believe that part of being an effective manager requires motivational skills and commitment to raising levels of achievement. Positivism in all interactions with students, staff, and parents, no matter how challenging the situation may be, is necessary to maintain high morale and trust. A sense of humor is essential. My main past management challenges have been to build strong teams and dealing with parental concerns, the latter being the most difficult and time-consuming and requiring measured degrees of diplomacy. I feel that having a calm, directive manner and the ability to inspire confidence during interactions with staff, students and parents to be one of my strengths.

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

To support a diverse and successful organisation, it is extremely essential to prioritise selection of diverse members and make sure to create an environment which is collaborative, supportive, and respectful to increase the participation and contribution of all members. This will not only increase better understanding of various cultures but will also increase the productivity of the organisation. Any member who feels included will automatically feel more responsible to working for the organisation and making it the best. Also having a workforce comprising of people with different backgrounds, experiences and skills means the ideas generated by these teams won't be cognate – they'll be innovative and creative. As a female from a national high school in India (a country that forms the second-largest population of international students going abroad), I will add much needed diversity and bring a new and previously unheard voice to the Board. Few steps that the Executive board can take: a. Identify the under-represented regions of the world and reach out to have a more diverse member body. Connect underrepresented members with internal and external mentors in their group to provide support and promote growth. Encourage their conference participation by providing scholarships. b. Acknowledge a variety of upcoming religious and cultural holidays and help members keep track of multicultural celebrations. c. Make a conscious effort to develop future leaders from all backgrounds and age groups. d. Encourage everyone to approach diversity from multiple angles by broadcasting webinars for the same and having open conversations at conferences during lunch hour or networking breaks. Allow people to speak up and get constructive feedback. e. Look at everything with the following viewpoint, 'Have we created conditions where every person can contribute in their unique, meaningful way and feel safe and secure doing that?' and if we find places where that's not the case, having the courage to admit that and work to change it,". I feel India is very under-represented in the International ACAC community and having someone from India would certainly attract other Indian school counselors to gain membership and provide valuable insights. Also I have had a fair amount of

experience organizing professional development programs for teachers at school and also in the local counselor community. I would bring to the board various cultural and educational perspectives.