



## Application for President-Elect

**Name:** Xiaofeng Wan

**Professional Title:** Independent Counselor

**Institution/Organization:** Wan College Admissions Consulting LLC

**Institution/Organization Location:** United States

**Membership Type:** Individual: Independent Educational Consultant (IEC)

[Candidate Video](#)

### **International ACAC Volunteer Experience:**

*Explain your motivation for pursuing a leadership role with International ACAC as well as why this position in particular. Highlight how your leadership experience and involvement with the organization make you a strong fit for the role.*

My decision to pursue the International ACAC presidency comes from over a decade of watching this organization serve as an essential bridge for our community. During nearly ten years at Amherst College and two years at Holy Cross, I saw repeatedly how International ACAC brought people together when it mattered most, whether navigating pandemic closures, geopolitical tensions, or simply creating spaces for community-building.

Right now feels like a critical moment for our profession. Geopolitical tensions, shifting immigration policies, and evolving global dynamics are reshaping how students move across borders. My work organizing and presenting at International ACAC conferences on everything from international student mobility to ethical admissions practices has shown me how much our community needs spaces for honest conversation and a path forward. Recruiting across Africa, Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the U.S. has deepened my commitment to what International ACAC does best: promoting equitable access, especially for high-achieving international students from low-income backgrounds who face the steepest barriers.

The work I've done has required bringing diverse groups together. At Amherst, I led international recruitment strategy while building trust with global partners during challenging periods. I've organized major convenings, such as the Amherst-Williams-Yale China High School Principals' Seminar, that created

space for genuine dialogue across key constituents. I've also tried to bring these conversations to wider audiences through my writing for Inside Higher Ed and University World News, media interviews with outlets like The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Economist, and BBC, and two bestselling books that have reached thousands of families and counselors. My scholarly research on international student mobility, conducted during my doctoral program at Boston College, also provides the theoretical grounding for this work.

What I bring is perspective from multiple vantage points: as a former international student, a longtime admissions professional, a scholar of international higher education, and now an independent consultant working directly with high schools, colleges, and families. International ACAC has shaped how I think about this work and made me a better professional. I'm ready to help guide our organization through what comes next, strengthening our role in connecting admission professionals and counselors worldwide.

**Previous Experience in Leadership:**

*Please describe your leadership experience, including your leadership philosophy, strategies for managing and supporting a committee, and the approaches you use to foster communication, collaboration, accountability, and recognition. Highlight any accomplishments that demonstrate your leadership effectiveness.*

I've always believed leadership works best when it's about empowering others rather than directing them. The most effective teams I've been part of are ones where everyone feels ownership of our shared goals and knows their contributions matter.

At Amherst, I led international recruitment for nearly a decade, managing strategy and budgets, and mentoring while serving as chair of our international committee. During that time, our international applicant pool nearly tripled to over 6,000 students, representing 40% of all applications. But what I'm most proud of isn't the numbers; it's the relationships we built across the five continents where we visited nearly every year. Working with organizations like the HALI Access Network in Africa taught me that effective leadership requires attentive listening, respect for cultural differences, understanding the human stories, and staying focused on why we do this work: helping launch students to new heights through education.

My approach to managing committees is straightforward: communicate clearly, share ownership of decisions, and give people room to do their best work. When I chaired Amherst's international committee, we made holistic decisions about our international class as a team. I coordinated our recruitment efforts across regions, from Africa to Asia to Latin America, but gave each team member real autonomy in their territories. I trained new international recruiters on evaluating applications from unfamiliar educational systems, and helped them build their own networks with schools and organizations across the globe.

Beyond Amherst, I've organized sessions at International ACAC, CIS Forum, ChinalCAC, EducationUSA

Forum, Harvard China Education Symposium, among others, that brought different perspectives into conversation. As a founding advisor and the chair of ChinaIACAC's Advisory Committee, I helped establish what became China's largest counseling association and served as the inaugural faculty member of the Education Leadership Institute for two consecutive years.

Throughout all of this, including my thought leadership in writing, public speaking, and two national bestsellers, my focus has been on transparency, bridge-building, and moving forward together. Those are the values I'd bring to leading International ACAC.

**Previous Experience in Volunteering:**

*Please outline your previous volunteer involvement and the skills, insights, or perspectives you have gained through service. Explain how these experiences have prepared you to contribute meaningfully to the work of this organization.*

Most of my volunteer work has focused on one question: how do we help talented students from under-resourced backgrounds access the education they deserve? These experiences have shown me what barriers look like from different perspectives and how to build partnerships that actually create opportunity.

During my time at Amherst, I worked closely with community-based organizations supporting high-achieving, low-income students. My collaboration with the HALI Access Network across Africa and EducationUSA centers meant meeting with their students where they were, running seminars on U.S. admissions, reviewing applications, and connecting counselors with resources they needed. Now, as an independent counselor, I've continued this work by attending the annual HALI INDABA to train counselors on writing strong recommendation letters and serving as a mentor for one-on-one counselor support.

The work I'm probably most proud of is helping establish the China Institute of College Admission Counseling (ChinaIACAC). As a founding advisor and the chair of the Advisory Committee, I've spent countless volunteer hours guiding what's become China's largest counseling association. For two years as an inaugural faculty member in the Education Leadership Institute, I trained counselors on ethical practices and navigating the U.S. admissions landscape. This work opened my eyes to what counselors are up against: limited resources, intense pressure from families, and constant battles against misinformation. These are universal pressures felt strongly by counselors all over the world.

I've also volunteered extensively at conferences, organizing sessions on everything from international student mobility to ethical practices. What struck me in these sessions was how hungry folks are for honest conversation about hard topics, geopolitical tensions, equity challenges, affordability for international students, and integrity in this work. It reminded me that we can always learn from each other and tackle tough issues together.

These experiences have prepared me to lead International ACAC in specific ways. I know how to create

inclusive spaces where different voices get heard. I've managed complex initiatives involving multiple stakeholders that require patience and cultural sensitivity. Most importantly, I've seen firsthand how our work changes students' lives when we prioritize access, transparency, and collaboration. That's what I want to bring to serving our global community.

**Understanding of the Role & Sharing Innovations & Vision:**

*Please outline your understanding of this role by identifying your top three priorities, why they matter, and how you would address them. Include any innovative ideas, how you would measure success, and current practices you feel are effective.*

Leading International ACAC right now means understanding we're in a moment of real challenge and opportunity. Here's what I see as most urgent and how I'd approach it.

Building bridges when forces try to divide us. Geopolitical tensions, immigration policy shifts, and rising nationalism are reshaping international student mobility. International ACAC needs to be a steady point of connection when external pressures push us apart. I'd expand regional convenings that bring counselors and admission professionals together for honest conversations about what we're facing. We need spaces where a counselor in Lagos and an admission officer in Boston can talk candidly about shared challenges. Success means seeing engagement grow across regions, especially those underrepresented, and hearing from members that they feel better equipped to support students through uncertainty.

Creating real pathways for students who need them most. International education has grown enormously, but high-achieving, low-income students remain severely underrepresented. That needs to change. I'd strengthen partnerships with organizations like the HALI Access Network and Second Chance at Higher Education to build more sustainable pathways. This includes developing practical resources for counselors working with low-income students, highlighting institutions genuinely committed to meeting full financial need, and creating mentorship programs connecting experienced professionals with counselors in under-resourced schools and regions. We'd measure success through member feedback and, more importantly, stories of impact, such as students who gained opportunities they otherwise wouldn't have.

Helping everyone navigate rapid change. Technology, AI, and evolving admissions practices are transforming our field. International ACAC should help members navigate these changes thoughtfully and ethically. I'd expand conference programming with hands-on workshops on real issues: evaluating AI-assisted applications, understanding unfamiliar credential systems, and addressing misinformation and fraud. I'd also explore year-round learning through webinars and regional workshops, so professional development doesn't happen just once a year. Success means strong participation, positive feedback, and evidence that people are implementing what they learn.

Our annual conference remains our greatest asset. Our committee structure works. We should preserve these strengths while innovating where needed.

**Advocacy Priorities in College Admissions or International Education:**

*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.*

The information gap facing international families is staggering. In many countries, families rely on unregulated agents, contradictory online sources, and rumors amplified through social media. I have watched families make costly decisions based on false promises, read applications shaped by fabricated narratives, and spoken with counselors exhausted from correcting persistent myths about selective college admissions. The students most harmed by this misinformation are often those with the fewest resources.

I have worked to address this problem through multiple channels. I have published articles and appeared on television to challenge misconceptions with evidence. My two books, both national bestsellers in China, were written to give families and counselors information they could trust in accessible language. Through mock application and recommendation letter workshops, I have trained hundreds of counselors worldwide in ethical practices that prioritize authenticity.

At Amherst, I emphasized direct communication with applicants through information sessions and in-person outreach, visiting more than 40 countries to meet students and families where they were. I have also used interviews with outlets such as The New York Times, the BBC, and The Wall Street Journal to reach broader audiences with accurate explanations of how international admissions actually work.

International ACAC is uniquely positioned to address this challenge. We should amplify accurate information, establish clear standards for ethical counseling, and develop trusted resources for counselors and families worldwide. Partnerships with organizations such as EducationUSA, ChinaCAC, and the HALI Access Network can support the creation of multilingual resources that address common misconceptions. We should also encourage colleges to communicate more transparently with international audiences, reducing families' reliance on bad actors.

This work goes to the heart of our community's integrity. When we champion transparency and ethical practice, we create a more equitable system in which students succeed based on genuine merit, not access to privileged information or the ability to pay for it.

**Supporting International ACAC's Strategic Plan:**

*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.*

As president, I would advance International ACAC's strategic plan by taking seriously what each pillar requires while remaining responsive to our members' needs.

Making membership valuable globally

Our members work in very different contexts, from well-resourced international schools to under-resourced public schools, and from large research universities to small liberal arts colleges. One-size-fits-all programming does not serve this diversity. I would expand regional initiatives that meet members where they are, partnering with local associations to offer targeted workshops on issues such as credential evaluation and supporting low-income students. I would also strengthen mentorship by connecting experienced professionals with those newer to the field. My networks across regions and relationships with organizations such as the HALI Access Network, EducationUSA, and ChinaCAC would help facilitate these connections. Success means members feel supported year-round, not only at our annual conference, and participation grows in underrepresented regions.

Clarifying who we are and what we stand for

International ACAC's brand should clearly reflect our values: ethical practice, cross-cultural understanding, and access. I would work to articulate what we stand for during periods of geopolitical uncertainty and widespread misinformation, not through vague statements but through substantive resources and thoughtful positions on issues affecting international students. Drawing on my experience communicating across cultures through writing, speaking, books and media engagement, I would help strengthen International ACAC's role as a trusted, authoritative voice in international admission and counseling.

Making operations work smoothly

Strong operations enable all other work. I would collaborate closely with our committees to streamline communication, clarify decision-making, and ensure leadership continuity. From my experience managing teams and now running my own consultancy, I know effective operations depend on clear roles, transparent processes, and respect for volunteers' time. I would also assess whether committee structures align with strategic priorities and establish meaningful ways to track progress.

These pillars are interconnected. A stronger member experience reinforces our brand, and efficient operations make both possible. My leadership approach emphasizes listening, consensus-building, and ensuring every initiative advances our mission.