



# INTERNATIONAL ACAC

## EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTIONS

### Application for Vice President of Membership & Data

**Name:** Francis Miller

**Professional Title:** Director of College Counseling

**Institution/Organization:** Xi'an Tie Yi High School

**Institution/Organization Location:** China

**Membership Type:** Secondary (High School)

[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.*

I have volunteered on what was formerly known as the International ACAC Membership Committee for more than 6 years, learning and serving under the following VPs: Michelle Chow Liu, Kate McKeen, Kim Tulloch Wynn, and Craig Brown. Currently, I am a volunteer on the International ACAC Membership & Data Committee. I am familiar with the vetting process for applicants and often provide assistance to interpret policy and procedures. I have also provided feedback on revisions to these policies and procedures. I have created a training video for the vetting process and have on occasion facilitated parts of committee meetings in the past in person at the annual conference and online. I will be a strong contributor in this role because I am familiar with the policies and procedures that are necessary to facilitate the work of the committee, as well as familiar with the committee's responsibilities to International ACAC. Moreover, as I have spent time on the committee, I am familiar with the way the work has evolved, including the new challenges that volunteers face in doing their work. From my past experience serving on the committee, I believe that I am an exceptional candidate to carry forward this committee's work.

#### **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.*

My most notable leadership experience for a volunteer organization is serving as a founding chair of two different ChinaCAC committees. First, from 2019-2022, I served as a founding co-chair of the ChinaCAC Professional Development Committee. I helped organize online events and networking activities. What I am most proud of from my time on that committee, however, is collaborating with my co-chairs to launch the ChinaCAC mentorship program. This program allows members new to the college counseling field to apply for an opportunity to be paired with experienced members for regular meetings throughout the year. The program has been renewed each year. I was also a founding co-chair of the ChinaCAC membership committee. I drove the initiative to transition ChinaCAC from a free organization to a fee-based membership organization. I was the primary responsible person for drafting ChinaCAC's membership policy, available at <https://www.chinaicac.org/#/membership>. I also initiated annual revisions of membership policy, including the addition of Member Expectations and Organizational Values. In this role, I have called and facilitated multiple meetings, the vetting and partnership development of significant organizational partner organizations including College Board, ETS, British Council, Cialfo, InitialView, Pioneer Academics, UCAS, and others. None of this would have been possible without the contributions of the incredible volunteers on our membership committee. I have also served in leadership positions at previous institutions. At my previous school, Avenues Shenzhen, I was a Dean and College Counselor, where I was a part of the school's leadership team and Secondary Division Leadership Team. I was responsible for revising and communicating school policies, writing a college counseling handbook, and many, many other responsibilities. I believe that these and other experiences has prepared me to serve as a VP sharing responsibility for a committee central to International ACAC's mission.

**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.*

My most significant volunteer experience is for International ACAC Membership Committee and ChinaCAC Membership Committee. Outside of these organizations, I have either currently or in the past volunteered as a Citizen Liaison for the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, a pub trivia host, a cycling group ride organizer, board game group organizer, a sponsor for Aspiring Women of Excellence in Xi'an, and an ambassador for the Schoerke Foundation which supports education in rural Ghana. I have also contributed to EducationUSA counselor workshops in Qingdao and Chengdu, presented at regional counselor events and gatherings in Xi'an and Shenzhen, and served as a mentor for other college counselors. I was an officer for the Penn Club of Beijing for three years from 2015-2018, contributing my effort to organize and host dozens of events for alumni, professors, and current and prospective students. I have gained various skills from each of these experiences that will be valuable for contributing to the work of International ACAC. This includes helping grow communities based on shared interests, fundraising, providing opportunities for professional development, providing opportunities for underserved populations, and reimagining what is possible to guide students in pursuit of their dreams at university abroad.

**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.*

Many of International ACAC's current practices come from the time and effort of countless previous volunteers. These efforts deserve recognition.

Moreover, any changes deserve careful consideration and must undergo a thorough review process to ensure that they will be able to produce the desired positive effect. Having served as a volunteer on committees in the past, I will bring my experience to balance the demand to efficiently execute new projects with careful consideration of the possible impacts and outcomes.

Specifically for International ACAC membership engagement, there are some hard success metrics like the number of new members, the renewal rate, and diversification of members. For the Membership and Data Committee, my immediate focus would specifically be on the core responsibilities of my committee, especially:

1. Bringing renewed excellence to the operational role of the Membership and Data Committee. This includes executing review of organizational and individual membership applications. Additionally, I would also investigate ways to fully utilize our technology platforms to ensure a speedy and professional vetting process for applicants that require this step.
2. Revising policy and audit language and procedures to reflect new needs. As a membership organization, our membership benefits are the reason why applicants are eager to join our organization. It is crucial that our membership-related policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to address the current needs and issues of our membership.
3. Bringing data-driven analysis of member demographics and trends to provide updates and assist other committees with their planning and outreach.

However, there are also many lead actions that contribute to these metrics and are related to these responsibilities, such as outreach, improving the member onboarding experience, and communications. One of my key areas of interest and innovation would be in bringing an educational component to our membership onboarding and renewal process. Currently, there is no educational activity or requirement to become an International ACAC member. Without this, our members may be unaware of International ACAC benefits, opportunities, or expectations. As a long-time serving member of the Membership Committee, I would be well-positioned to collaborate with the VP of the Member Engagement Committee to follow through on this initiative.

**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.*

One of the critical issues faced by college counselors in China, where I work, is the pressure to deliver results in a challenging environment. I don't think this issue is unique to China, but in my more than 10 years working in China helping students apply to universities abroad, I believe that there are many environmental, cultural, and other unique factors that lead to the situation here being exceptional. These factors include a widespread willingness to invest in education that rivals that in any other part of the world. It also includes a focus on testing, results, and rankings of both universities and secondary schools for new student recruitment. There is immense pressure on students and college counselors to deliver results, especially pressure from families and the school administration. This pressure never goes away. There is also a growing array of agents, independent consultants, and school-based educators who are eager to support students on their path to study abroad, but are largely not aware of or are not compelled to adhere to any kind of professional or ethical standards of practice in education, including in college counseling. This has created an environment that brings additional challenges to students and counselors who want to "follow the rules" or prepare their applications "the right way". While there is no single solution to address the challenges that counselors in China face, organizations like ChinaCAC, as well as the multitude of smaller regional associations and coalitions of college counselors have made incredible progress to improve the professionalism and ethical practices in college counseling and school counseling here.

However, there is more to be done. International ACAC has the depth and reach in its membership to do more here. If I am elected to serve in this position, I will propose initiatives geared to tackle these and other related issues.

**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.*

My response here will be short and sweet:

To enhance the member experience globally, I would bring excellence to the prospective member application process and add an educational component to the processes of new-member onboarding and membership renewal.

To clarify the international brand, it is important for International ACAC to continue to grow. This includes growing the presence of secondary school and institutional members, especially those outside of the U.S. Seeking ways to grow our membership through events and promotion will be a crucial way to support International ACAC's continued development, presence, and influence.

To optimize internal operations, the core work of the Membership and Data Committee will be the most

important part of my role. My experience and understanding of the application and vetting process will make me well-suited to identifying opportunities to thoughtfully improve our existing processes.