



2022 Executive Board Election Candidate

President-Elect

Name: Michelle Chow-Liu

Title: Head of High School Counseling

Institution: Western Academy of Beijing

Location/Region: China/East Asia

Member Group: Secondary (High School)

Background and Experience

Years of experience in post-secondary admissions counseling or related fields?

10+ years

Please describe any professional or volunteer experience you feel would be relevant for serving on the International ACAC Executive Board.

I have had the honor of serving as the VP for Membership since 2017 and a member since 2009. I have come to understand and appreciate that putting members at the center of our work is deeply rooted within the DNA of this association. This is evident in how much effort continues to be put into ensuring that our work focuses primarily on supporting members. In my role as VP for Membership, I have contributed to our drive to keep members at the center by ensuring membership issues are handled promptly. In addition, I have implemented a structural foundation that allows us to screen applications more systematically and efficiently. We have also strived for sustainability and diversity within our membership: We proposed a fee increase to continue our work in supporting our under-resourced members and extended the dues waiver timeline for applications. The membership team also collaborated with other committees by observing and interpreting data to support their work as needed. Being part of

the executive board for the past four years - engaging at board meetings and attending strategic planning meetings; I am also acutely aware of the plans and intentions for the future. During my VP role, I've had to lead 16-20 committee members and am proud to have been successful in motivating and collaborating with them. As we move into our next phase of strategic planning, I am ready to listen but, more importantly, take action in supporting the next exciting step of our association.

Please describe [how you have engaged in the international community](#), and the impact this has had on your professional life. Describe any [International ACAC Committee experience](#) you have.

As a member, I have presented and engaged in various sessions and webinars in the past 12 years. As the VP for Membership, I collaborated effectively with others on the executive team. I also worked closely with our VP for Admissions Practices to ensure the association's Policy and Procedure (P&P) information is up to date. We ensured that our members were aware of and had a good understanding of the P&P. At our annual membership meetings, I collected and analyzed data on our membership growth and shared these trends with our membership. I have also volunteered to be part of the DEIJ rollout group (aka Forward Thinking), the steering planning committee, and the strategic consultant hiring committee. I have also supported the Forward Thinking town hall earlier in 2021 and the various webinars held this past year. Some of my other roles included: -Develop communications regarding issues of membership -Contribute to discussions regarding the development of membership policies -Generate ideas for new or creative outreach -Data analysis of the membership population and providing trends and updates to the members International ACAC is on the brink of exciting work. I would like to continue volunteering my time to this organization and community because International ACAC and its members have supported me and my growth as an international school counselor.

[President-Elect Specific Questions](#)

Please describe your previous role(s) on the International ACAC Board and/or within International ACAC and how you see this as relevant for serving as President-Elect.

Before joining the International ACAC Executive Board, I supported the creation of the Beijing International Schools Counseling Network (BISCN). This network created opportunities for international school counselors across Beijing to network, collaborate, and discuss various topics and needs of our international student population. Pre-Covid 19, we created a system for taking turns hosting various university fairs throughout the school year. This sharing of resources allowed us to present a united front and show our parents and students that we are colleagues rather than competitors. I continue to support this space as we transition to a virtual

platform. We continue to host bi-weekly university panel sessions and invite university reps to offer sessions pertinent to our collective community during the academic year. During my years on the International ACAC Board and my role in the creation of BISCN, I have come to learn and better understand the ins and outs of the International ACAC association and the work that we do, as well as the needs of international school counselors around the world. While there may be some aspects of the role that I am not privy to, I am confident in my abilities to pick up and continue the work of our past board and leadership teams. Knowing our association well allows me to provide a smooth transition for the association, which is essential as we embark on the strategic planning effort.

Please share your philosophy on leadership and what makes an effective leader. Please provide examples from your previous experience.

I have a servant-leadership philosophy; my role first and foremost is to serve. I strive to share the power, put the people I work with first, and help others develop and perform as highly as possible. I also believe that it is important to generate buy-in from our membership community on the types of actions we hope to take. One of the most important ways to develop this buy-in is to have a strong, positive relationship with the community. I will endeavor to focus on building relationships so that we can work together to support the association's growth. In 2019, I was promoted to the Head of HS Counseling at WAB. While I work primarily with a team of 3 other Counselors and an office assistant, this role also includes collaborating with other HODs, administrators, and the larger Whole School Counseling Team. As the HOD, I speak with one voice when representing my team publicly. I work to ensure consensus through conversations, as presenting a united front allows us to work more efficiently and strategically. It is essential to be flexible in our thinking to discover best practices. As VP for Membership, I work to ensure that each member of the team of 19 members has a voice in our projects through providing opportunities for feedback. I think it is crucial that when volunteers give their time to the association, their effort is appreciated and their opinions matter. Recognizing our volunteers is what will continue to drive the association forward.

Please share your vision for the future of International ACAC; speak to priorities, growth and change in our association.

International ACAC has gone through enormous growing pains; we are on the cusp of thirty years of existence and have grown exponentially in the past six years to 3500 members. With a system of a three-year term turnaround, I wish to support us in instituting a system of transition where incoming board members can more efficiently continue the work of past board

members. Currently, we are in the process of creating VP handbooks to ensure that institutional knowledge is kept in writing. I hope to continue creating systems such as these to ensure sustainability. Continuing the success of our Mentor Year Program is a crucial goal. To further support this initiative, I hope to find creative ways to support new International ACAC members in their onboarding process. This includes incorporating the DEI lens when considering our needs and any future initiatives we hope to pursue. Doing so will allow us to find opportunities for new voices and perspectives to be seen and heard. We are also in the thick of strategic planning, with many exciting changes coming ahead. Some of the work we are looking into may be easy to implement, while others will require a lot of time to accomplish. In the next ten years, the growth of International ACAC will require a lot of work and reflection as we consider restructuring our systems and procedures. Throughout this time of planning and growth, I will endeavor to keep the association and our members at the center of focus.

Please describe any event planning or organizing experience you have had. Please list the year and your specific role.

I have had experience with planning large-scale conferences when I worked with my alma mater (Simon Fraser University) in the early 2000s. This included working with the management of the venue on the logistics of hosting conferences, ensuring smooth registrations, and troubleshooting on the day of the event. In my current position at WAB, I have worked closely with our parent community to plan and host the annual Career Fair event for our students from 2008 to 2019. The yearly event involves inviting approximately 60 professionals to share their past work and academic history with our students. My role included creating the programming, supporting and preparing the students, communicating with all stakeholders (i.e. students, parents, faculty, administrators, and professionals), and, of course, planning out the logistics of the event with the support staff (i.e. the properties department, security managers, and catering). From 2008 to 2019, I was also WAB's World of Work Coordinator in addition to my role as a school counselor. It involved placing approximately 120 tenth-grade students with internship opportunities. In addition to setting up presentations to parents and students introducing the purpose of the program, I had to liaise with a diverse group of potential employers to support each student's experience. I met with each student to learn about their interests; reading and providing edits to their resumes and cover letters. The role required timely communication with all stakeholders and trouble-shooting issues during the week. Teachers also had drop-in visits, which required collaboration and coordination.

Part of this position is managing people, committees, and projects. What is your experience in this area? Describe your management style.

As professionals, we must entrust others to do the work assigned; with that said, I do not believe in micromanaging. I like to play to everyone's strengths and ensure they are comfortable with what is delegated. In working with the committee members, I have sought to support them with finding the most appropriate roles that utilize their strengths and respect their other commitments. I am a listener and collaborator, which would be my management style. My longevity at WAB means that I have worked with various teams – thirteen different counselors, three counseling interns, and three different office assistants. There have been different personalities in our small office. The constant change in our office has trained me to work with diverse individuals and be attuned to each member's strengths. I am also flexible and nimble and am able to pivot as the situation requires. While I was only promoted in 2019 to the Head of HS Counseling, I have been a part of building this office, which included being reflective and communicating to other experience counselors to find the best practices and support the growth of WAB. Again, spending effort in building a relationship and ensuring voices are being heard and felt seen is something I wish to continue in my leadership journey.

Name your three most impactful takeaways from the December 2020 DEI Organization Assessment Report. 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?

I have worked with Julius Erolin and understand his work with the Executive Board. The first important takeaway is: There is more work to be done. I would like to continue to put DEI at the forefront of all our conversations. As an executive board, we need to ensure the association's longevity by putting systems and structures in place that incorporate the DEI lens. We need to ensure that DEI initiatives are embedded into the work we are already doing and strive for DEI to become part of the DNA of International ACAC and, by extension, become a part of us. The work with DEI is a marathon, not a sprint. The second important takeaway: The DEI report has provided us with a foundation on which we need to continue expanding on through continued dialoguing with all constituents. Our membership satisfaction is high, over 75% of our membership is satisfied with the current International ACAC - and 72% of our members agreed that DEI is essential. What these statistics show is that our work matters and needs to continue. Key questions: How do we bridge this gap with 25% of our members who are dissatisfied and the 28% of our members who do not identify DEI as essential? The third important takeaway: Plenty of members are interested in engaging with the work and not enough opportunities. The Executive Board needs to consider finding ways for our association to provide more opportunities for these eager members to engage with our work.

All Applicant Questions

Please provide a maximum 250 word statement of why you wish to run for the International ACAC Board, and other relevant information you would like members to know about you that you have not previously shared in this application. Your statement will be shared with the general membership if you are slated for a position.

I am running for the President-Elect position within the International ACAC Board. I have been a HS Counselor at WAB since 2009 and I have served in the VP for Membership role in International ACAC since 2017. In my latter role, I am honored to have played an active role in the successes and accomplishments of the membership committee during my tenure. I have worked to develop and establish the committee, working to improve and systematize the practices, policies, and procedures of membership application to better support our members. My first task was to streamline the vetting of our membership applicants. I created a process that would be sustainable, more efficient, and allow for transparency. I wish to continue supporting this work moving forward, especially with DEIJ and strategic planning. For example, the membership committee completed three revisions of our Membership's Policies and Procedures with plans to continue revisiting it to ensure integrity. The next step for this committee would be to revise our P&P with a specific DEIJ lens. I have served this organization by looking forward and examining ways to increase and diversify our membership within the realms of university admissions and counseling. Knowing that the life and future of this organization depends on its members, I seek to continue developing strategies and taking actions that aim to engage our current and future members. This aligns well with my overarching goal: To be part of an organization that supports members who puts students at the core.