



Application for Region 2 Representative

Name: Toa Lohe

Professional Title: University Guidance Counsellor

Institution/Organization: Shanghai United International School Gubei Campus

Institution/Organization Location: China

[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 motivation for pursuing a leadership role with International ACAC stems from a deep professional commitment to strengthening ethical, developmentally grounded university guidance within international school contexts. Having worked for nearly eight years with globally mobile, high-achieving, and culturally diverse secondary students, I have seen firsthand how critical strong counselling networks are essential to student wellbeing and postsecondary success. International ACAC plays an important role in sustaining this ecosystem.

My involvement with IACAC as a mentor during the 2024–2025 cycle reinforced this conviction. Mentoring an early-career counsellor highlighted both the challenges that they were now facing (student wellbeing and hyper-competitive admissions narratives), The mentor role allowed me to contribute directly to professional development, while also sharpening my own leadership skills in listening and guidance.

Professionally, I currently serve as a University Guidance Counsellor at Shanghai United International School (Gubei Campus), supporting IB Diploma Programme students navigating complex global admissions pathways. My work emphasizes year-by-year developmental guidance. I have led initiatives that embed structured reflection, narrative development, and interdisciplinary exploration into the secondary school experience, securing senior leadership support by framing guidance as a pillar of institutional integrity and student wellbeing.

These experiences align closely with the responsibilities of leadership within International ACAC. My approach to advising is grounded in the disciplined practice of helping students assemble meaning from a mosaic of experiences through reflection, structured inquiry, and guided experimentation. I have seen how writing exercises, independent projects, creative portfolios, and interdisciplinary exploration enable students to recognize connections that are not immediately visible, often revealing multiple legitimate pathways forward.

Serving in a leadership capacity with International ACAC would allow me to give back to an organization that meaningfully shaped my own professional growth, while helping ensure that the association continues to evolve in response to the real challenges counsellors and students now face.

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 leadership experience is grounded in the belief that effective guidance systems and effective committees are built through clarity of purpose, shared responsibility, and disciplined reflection. Over time, my university advising philosophy has come to directly inform my leadership approach. Just as I guide students to assemble meaning from a mosaic of experiences through structured inquiry and reflection, I approach leadership as the work of helping groups identify priorities, make connections across perspectives, and move forward with coherence rather than urgency.

My leadership formation began at Stanford University, where I served as a peer advisor, residential arts coordinator, and alumni assistant coordinator. These roles required balancing autonomy with accountability, coordinating across diverse stakeholders, and supporting peers navigating academic and personal transitions. They shaped my belief that people perform best when expectations are transparent, communication is regular, and recognition is tied to contribution rather than visibility.

Currently, as a university guidance counsellor, involved in launching new initiatives, I have consistently worked to unite students, counsellors, teachers, and external educational organizations around shared goals related to academic readiness and university preparation. Notable examples include designing and leading the Ivy League Plus programme for highly selective U.S. applicants; co-developing the Technology and Society Writing Competition with Shanghai Jiao Tong University Global College; facilitating collaboration with NYU Shanghai's Institute of Contemporary Arts; and introducing Jiahui Health's Scholar Program. Each initiative required aligning timelines, clarifying roles, managing expectations, and sustaining collaboration across institutions with different cultures and incentives.

When managing or supporting committees, I prioritize early alignment on purpose, scope, and decision-making authority. I use structured agendas, written follow-ups, and timelines to support communication and accountability, while creating space for professional judgment and diverse

viewpoints. I foster collaboration by anchoring discussions in shared outcomes rather than individual preferences.

These experiences demonstrate a leadership style that is systems-oriented, inclusive, and practical.

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.

My approach to the Regional Council Representative role is shaped by my advising philosophy: students, like regions, are best understood as mosaics rather than monoliths. No single metric, policy, or practice explains the whole picture.

1. Regional cohesion through localized resources

Why it matters: Region 2 shares overlapping challenges, yet members often experience International ACAC resources as generalized or Western-centric.

How I would address it: I would work to ensure resources are regionally relevant by supporting localized briefings, translated or culturally adapted materials, and regional case-based discussions. As in advising, the goal is not to privilege one voice but to manage information flow so members can make sound judgments within their own contexts.

Measurement: Increased regional engagement, feedback on relevance, and broader participation across countries.

2. Sub-regional distinction and representation

Why it matters: Northern China, Southern China, Southeast Asia, and Oceania face materially different regulatory environments, school systems, family expectations, and student mobility patterns. Treating them as interchangeable obscures reality and weakens advocacy.

How I would address it: I would advocate for clearer sub-regional differentiation a. Northern China (Beijing, Shanghai), Mongolia, Korea, and Japan
b. Southern China (Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shenzhen), Taiwan, Macau, and Hong Kong
c. Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia).

Measurement: More precise sub-programming for counseling practices and resources.

3. Thriving, context-aware professional development

Why it matters: Counselors in this region navigate competing voices (families, institutions, governments, rankings, and peer narratives) while confronting pressure for early specialization and prestige-driven myths.

How I would address it: I would support professional development that emphasizes reflection, interdisciplinary thinking, and philosophical exploration. Scenario-based workshops and practitioner-led forums would be prioritized.

Measurement: Sustained participation, qualitative feedback, and increased counselor confidence in complex advising cases.

Ultimately, this role is about honoring complexity without fragmenting the community—helping International ACAC reflect the region as it truly is, and supporting members as they guide students through the same disciplined practice of becoming.

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.

A critical issue in international college admissions that I have consistently sought to champion is equitable access to accurate, professionally grounded guidance for ambitious international students targeting highly selective universities. Too often, students and families lack a clear understanding of what actually makes admission to top institutions possible, which creates space for misinformation, overreliance on private agents, and practices that undermine both student development and institutional integrity.

While the principle of “best fit” remains central, it must be accompanied by transparent explanations of academic readiness, contextual evaluation, and long-term preparation. Without shared professional standards and visible, internationally recognized counselling practices, students may feel compelled to seek certainty through unregulated advising services. This disproportionately affects families navigating unfamiliar admissions systems and weakens trust in school-based counselling.

I believe advocacy should focus on strengthening the counsellor’s role as the primary, credible source of admissions guidance within schools, while promoting greater consistency in how ambitious students are advised across international contexts. For new counsellors in particular, the challenge is understanding how institutional structures, counseling styles, and data-informed practice are unique for every student.

Our responsibility is not to engineer outcomes, but to design advising practices that are ethical, legible, and aligned with how institutions actually evaluate students. Advancing this standard would meaningfully improve equity, trust, and long-term outcomes for international students and the counselling community alike.