



2025 Regional Council Election Candidate

Region 4

Name: Nidal Nassar

Professional Title: Assistant Director of Admissions

Institution/Organization: Northwestern University in Qatar

Country of Residence: Qatar

Member Group: Post-Secondary (College & University)

Applicant Questions

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 entered the field of education by choice, driven by a deep sense of purpose and belonging.

My journey began with one educator who changed the course of my life during a difficult time. As a teenager facing personal, financial, and social challenges, I was facing issues and burdens. But this one educator saw potential in me, and showed me a clearer path. Their belief in my energy and passion planted a seed that grew into a lifelong commitment to education. That experience taught me that this field is more than a job, it's life-changing. From that moment on, I knew I wanted to give back and become that person for others.

I come from a diverse and under-resourced background. I started working at the age of 13 and held my first full-time job at 18 to support my education. My path has taken me through a wide range of industries and roles, from entry-level jobs to leadership positions, both nationally and internationally. These experiences shaped my character, strengthened my empathy, and helped me grow into a leader; not someone who simply manages, but someone who aspire to inspire and uplift.

With a smile and a suitcase, I've traveled across continents with colleagues (road champions

and companions), meeting students, educators, and families from around the world. In every interaction, I've strived to add value, serve with integrity, and uphold the ethical guidelines set by NACAC.

While attending the regional International ACAC conference in India, I sat in on a session led by some of my colleagues. I was deeply inspired by their passion for the organization and their dedication to the field of higher education. They spoke about the meaningful impact International ACAC has had on their work and how others can get more involved. Their words resonated with me, and I left the session feeling a strong desire to contribute more actively to the organization's mission.

I'm a person fueled by passion, purpose, and action. I'm constantly looking for ways to grow, to expand access, and to help more students break cycles and build futures. In a world increasingly shaped by artificial interactions and individualism, I believe I can bring something essential to this role: authentic human connection, human support, human experience, and human passion.

I'm eager to contribute to International ACAC in a leadership capacity, not only because I believe in the mission, but because I live it every day. I know what education can do, because I've lived what it saved.

Drawing from your previous experience in volunteering and leadership, how have these roles equipped you with the skills and insights necessary for the Founding Regional Representative position? Please highlight your leadership philosophy and strategies for effectively managing and leading a volunteer committee, with a focus on communication, collaboration, and recognition. Additionally, share specific accomplishments that demonstrate your ability to build professional communities, mentor emerging leaders, and promote inclusive and culturally responsive practices—key responsibilities of this role.

I've worn many hats over the years, as a volunteer, a team member, a team lead, a mentor, and a connector, and through all of that, I've learned that leadership isn't about being the loudest in the room or having all the answers. For me, it's about showing up, listening, and creating space for others to grow, contribute, and feel like they belong.

What's shaped me most is working in diverse, resource-limited environments where collaboration and creativity were essential. I started working early in life and grew into leadership by experience, not title. I've led student initiatives since middle school, supported international school programs, and brought people together across different time zones and cultures. I've had to figure things out as I went, but that's where I learned to trust people, delegate, and build something meaningful as a team.

I ran for both my school and university student boards, and have been serving in leadership roles ever since. Even after graduation, I stayed connected with fellow alumni, helping them find job opportunities and access financial support for further education.

One of the things I'm most proud of was helping bring counselors and universities together in my region during a time when many felt isolated or uncertain, starting with the pandemic to the current challenging times in higher education. We hosted virtual sessions, offered

mentorship to newer counselors, and created a space that felt supportive and energizing.

When it comes to working with a volunteer committee, I keep things simple and human:

- Clear, open communication: no guessing games
- Collaboration: No success can happen without it
- Appreciation: making sure people feel seen, valued, and not taken for granted

I'm also a big believer in mentoring and opening doors for others, especially those who are just getting started or who come from backgrounds where they may not always feel represented, similar to where I came from. I try to be the kind of leader I needed when I was younger (or even now), someone who listens, who believes in you, and who helps you find your voice. We are all storytellers, we just need the opportunity to tell!

If I'm given the chance to serve as a Founding Regional Representative, I'd bring all of this with me: heart, hustle, and a strong belief that leadership is about lifting others while continuing to grow yourself. I don't pretend to know it all, but I care deeply, and I'll keep showing up for the work and the people.

As a Founding Regional Representative for International ACAC, how would you outline your understanding of the role, including the priority areas you would focus on, your overall vision for the region, and the challenges you anticipate addressing? Additionally, what innovative solutions would you propose to strengthen all regional networks, enhance member engagement, and improve communication between members, the Council, and the Board, while acknowledging current practices or programs you find effective?

Serving as the Founding Regional Representative for the MENA region would be both a privilege and a responsibility I don't take lightly. This region is rich in diversity, culture, and commitment to students, but it's also a region that often faces shifting systems, limited infrastructure, and, at times, is boxed into a single narrative. I believe one of the most important things we can do right now is to show the voices of the educators, counselors, and advocates who do the work every day.

My vision for this role is simple: to listen, to connect, and to represent.

If selected, I would focus on three core areas:

- Representation with purpose : ensuring that MENA is not just present but meaningfully contributing to IACAC's global mission. This means actively collecting and sharing regional perspectives, and turning feedback into actionable steps and advocacy.
- Sustainable relationship-building : going beyond one-time events to create lasting professional networks across schools and universities. This could include informal local meetups, mentorship pairings, or small cross-institutional initiatives that allow people to keep learning from each other.
- Equity in access and growth: focusing on reducing barriers for counselors and educators across the region, whether it's financial, geographic, or language-based and making sure everyone has a fair shot at opportunities, development, and leadership.

Throughout my admissions work, and years of mentoring and volunteering, I've seen the impact of IACAC's community firsthand. I've learned from colleagues across regions,

benefited from shared resources, and witnessed how collaboration between members strengthens the entire profession. I would continue building those bridges, learning from what's working well in other regions, bringing our unique MENA voice to the table, and fostering cross-regional collaboration wherever possible.

My leadership philosophy is rooted in empathy, consistency, passion and service. I've organized regional workshops, supported students and families across borders, and stayed connected with alumni to mentor and guide them through their next steps. I don't see leadership as a spotlight, but as a platform for others to grow, to lead, and to feel like they belong.

My role, if elected, would be to help show that: to open doors, connect members across borders, and ensure our region isn't just included in global conversations, but actively shaping them alongside fellow Regional Representatives.

As a Founding Regional Representative, advocacy for international students is central to International ACAC's mission. Identify a critical issue in college admissions or international education that you would prioritize addressing in your region. Explain its significance, the potential impact on students and institutions, and how you would collaborate with regional and global stakeholders to drive meaningful change.

I am a product of "study abroad" and have firsthand experience of what it means to travel to a different country at 19 to pursue education. Mine was a bit easier as it began as an exchange program, but it still brought many complexities, and that was during a more stable international situation. Now, globally and especially in MENA, one critical issue I would prioritize is addressing the growing instability and uncertainty students face around studying abroad, particularly regarding international education pathways and access to financial aid. I experienced the stress of it as a student, as a family member, and currently as an Admissions professional. Right now, many students in our region are navigating a complex and often unpredictable environment. Political shifts, changing visa policies, fluctuating travel restrictions, and economic challenges have made planning for higher education abroad more difficult than ever. On top of that, access to reliable financial aid and scholarships remains uneven, leaving talented students uncertain about whether they can realistically afford to pursue their dreams.

This issue is significant because it directly impacts students' futures and well-being. When uncertainty grows, students may delay or abandon plans for international study, limiting their educational opportunities and potential for personal and professional growth. Institutions, meanwhile, risk missing out on diverse, motivated applicants from a region with immense talent and potential. To address this, I would collaborate with regional counselors, schools, and universities to gather up-to-date, accurate information on financial aid options and policy changes, and share these insights broadly through workshops, webinars, and resource hubs tailored to our region's needs. Strengthening communication channels between students, counselors, and institutions will help reduce anxiety and empower students with clearer pathways.

On the global stage, I would work with IACAC members and leadership to promote understanding of MENA's unique challenges, advocate for more transparent admissions and financial aid policies, and encourage institutions to consider the impacts of geopolitical and

economic instability on our students' ability to commit to study abroad.

This work is essential to fulfilling IACAC's mission of advocating for international students, ensuring that despite uncertainty, they have the support to pursue meaningful educational journeys.

Explain how you would use this position to advance International ACAC's strategic plan by aligning your top three priorities with the organization's three pillars: enhancing member experience globally, clarifying the international brand, and optimizing internal operations.

I see this role as a chance to actively advance International ACAC's strategic plan by focusing on three priorities that closely align with the organization's pillars: enhancing member experience globally, clarifying the international brand, and optimizing internal operations.

First, making sure members feel connected and supported is very important to me. The MENA region is rich in diversity, yet many members face challenges related to distance, differing time zones, and limited resources that can leave them feeling disconnected. I want to create inclusive, accessible programming, virtual workshops, regional forums, and peer-to-peer mentorship that meets members where they are. Clear and timely communication, tailored resources, and open channels for feedback will be key in making every member feel valued, supported, and connected to the broader IACAC community.

Second, clarifying and strengthening our international brand is crucial, particularly for a region like MENA, where uncertainty often overshadow the real stories of talent and resilience. I want to share real stories about our successes and challenges to help change those views and encourage admissions offices to be more aware of cultural differences. A clear and welcoming brand will help us all feel proud and united.

Third, improving how we work behind the scenes is important for lasting success. I want to help make volunteer opportunities fair and open to everyone in the region. Making it easier for members to find information and get involved will help grow leadership and make sure MENA's voice is heard in the organization's decisions.

This role matters to me personally. Having gone through international education myself, I want to help build a community where everyone feels heard and supported. I want to connect people across regions, encouraging teamwork and understanding. By focusing on these priorities, I believe we can create a stronger, more welcoming International ACAC community that supports students, counselors, and schools everywhere.

I'm excited about the chance to serve as Founding Regional Representative and to work with members from MENA and beyond to make this vision real.