



## 2022 Executive Board Election Candidate

### Vice President for Admissions Practices

**Name:** Ruby Bhattacharya

**Title:** Director of Recruitment and Selection

**Institution:** Barnard College

**Location/Region:** United States/Canada & U.S.

**Member Group:** Post-Secondary (College & University)

### 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 served as VP for Admissions Practices on the Executive Board since 2019 and have chaired the Admissions Practices committee during this time. I co-chaired the Ad-Hoc Committee for Financial Aid Forms, which created the International Student Application for Financial Aid and the International Student Financial Certification Document, served on the Governance & Nominating Committee from 2020-2021, and have been a Scholar Mentor. I also served on the Membership Committee from 2014-2019. I evaluated prospective International ACAC membership applications for approval from for-profit applicants, independent consultants, and recruitment agents and worked closely with the VP for Membership to clarify and re-evaluate our “double-dipping” policies and individual membership criteria. From 2015-2016, I was chosen for the International ACAC Task Force on the Membership of Agents, which clarified the organization’s position regarding agents by submitting a proposal to the

Board, and incorporated the NACAC International Initiatives Committee's work into our Policies and Procedures. In 2021, the NACAC Board of Directors appointed me to its Admissions Practices Committee, which promotes ethical practice education among NACAC members and is responsible for editing the Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission. At Swarthmore and Barnard, I have served on various hiring and administrative committees. As a graduate student, I was on the planning committee for the Harvard Alumni of Color Conference and as an alumna volunteer, I speak with HGSE graduate students one-on-one and serve on admissions and career panels.

**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.**

Higher education is what brought my Indian parents to the United States. My commitment to our community has been personal from the start. I credit so much of my professional growth as an international admissions professional over the last eleven years to International ACAC. I have attended the 2012, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 conferences and the Regional Institute in Shanghai in 2015 and various virtual programs. A full list of my International ACAC conference, Webinar Wednesday, and Regional Roundup presentations is on my resume. I started on the Membership Committee from 2014-2019 and was selected to join a 2015 Task Force to establish International ACAC's position regarding agents. While in graduate school from 2016-2017, I continued vetting applications and assisting the VP for Membership with rewriting membership policies. I began serving as the VP for Admissions Practices in 2019 and also served as a Scholar Mentor. I was on the GNC from 2020-2021. Recently, I co-chaired the Ad-Hoc Committee for Financial Aid Forms. These involvements have furthered my knowledge about the broader landscape of the international educational field. As a Board member, I have contributed to the "Forward Together" Strategic Planning and have been active in advancing DEIJ discussions. I lead ethical practice sessions for our members and have presented at ACCIS and Education USA's annual conferences and adviser trainings. I represent our international community on the NACAC National AP Committee. At Barnard, I oversee domestic/international admissions, and am fortunate to have an extensive admission and counseling colleague network worldwide.

### **VP Admissions Practices Specific Questions**

**Please describe your familiarity with Admissions Practices issues, in particular with the NACAC Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission. Please describe how this relates to international education.**

AP has transformed since 2019. When I began in July 2019, International ACAC was operating under CEPP. I spent my first weeks responding to inquiries, corresponding with members who were not in compliance, and assisting with NACAC investigations. Within two months, a moratorium went into effect due to the DOJ's inquiry, and the deletion of three key CEPP provisions was approved at the 2019 NACAC conference. At that conference, I met with NACAC leaders and legal counsel to understand the DOJ inquiry, NACAC's response, and the broader implications, keeping our Board and our members updated throughout. I guided International ACAC through the transition from the CEPP to the current Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission. I am humbled that our community trusted me with this during an uncertain time. I contributed to NACAC conversations that led to the current Guide to ensure International ACAC's voices were heard as the new ethical standards for our field came together. After the Guide's approval, my committee ensured that International ACAC's policies/procedures shifted from enforcement to NACAC's AP Three Pillars: Education, Communication, and Advocacy. Among affiliates, we are considered an example for the future of AP work because of how successfully we pivoted. My committee members and I have presented on the Guide for summer conferences, Webinar Wednesdays, and regional roundups. I presented with NACAC on the Guide at the EducationUSA Forum and at ACCIS, and now serve on the National AP Committee - representing our International ACAC interests as edits are made.

**In your professional experience, please describe the different educational systems to which you have been exposed and how you see this as relevant to the VP for Admissions Practices position.**

Over an eleven-year career, I have traveled throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the Americas; however, I have overseen application review and selection for students from all countries outside of the US as well as international students attending secondary schools in the US. Because of my recruitment and selection experiences, I am very familiar with secondary school educational systems around the world. Throughout my career, International ACAC conferences, webinars, Executive Board experience, and our members have furthered my knowledge. While I have read applications for multiple colleges, I am aware of the narrow scope that this presents in the larger landscape of global higher education. I attended graduate school to pursue a master's degree intending to broaden my knowledge of higher education; through my graduate studies, I learned more about pathway programs, community colleges, and online education. At Barnard, I have undergone F1 Student Status and SEVIS procedures training and serve on the Administrative Internationalization Group, a committee that supports the recruitment, enrollment, immigration, academic success, and career pursuits of international students. I attended Swarthmore as a transfer student, so transfer student populations are also very near to me. Affordability for international students is also very important to me. I have been privileged to work for institutions that provide need-based aid, and through my

conference presentations, committee service, and work with Education USA, I have worked closely with colleagues in our membership to initiate dialogue about how we can continue to remove barriers for international students.

**Please describe ideas you have for the future direction of this position, or specific initiatives you would like to develop. This may include this specific position, or may be in collaboration with another Vice President. Be as detailed as possible.**

My entire role changed when I began as Vice President for Admissions Practices (AP) and I have enjoyed reimagining AP. My initial ideas have been implemented or are currently in the works. I firmly believe that we can only act ethically if we do so with equity and inclusion at the heart of discussions regarding industry standards. The Guide only being published in English was a barrier; thanks to Duolingo, AP facilitated the Guide's translation into Chinese and Spanish with more languages to come. I have collaborated with the VP for Advocacy & Outreach in chairing the Ad-Hoc Committee, which created two free forms to reduce barriers for international students seeking aid from universities and to urge leaders to center their admissions practices around access. The VP for Membership and I implemented new auditing initiatives to ensure that members remain in compliance with our policies/procedures. AP and Membership collaborate to periodically audit members' practices. If re-elected, I would create an AP resources website, in partnership with Communications, where the Guide translations will live as well as sample dilemmas and how to handle such situations based on the Guide. AP seeks to be the official resources for our members needing confidential advice as they encounter ethical dilemmas. I would also like to see us require ethics trainings for members and to offer ethics-focused credentials to ensure more members have a firm knowledge of the Guide. Educating our community empowers our membership to advocate for ethical practice in their daily work.

**Part of this position is managing people, committees, and projects. What is your experience in this area? Describe your management style. How do you like to be managed?**

At Barnard, I oversee twenty application readers and chair our domestic and international admissions committees. In addition to leading our recruitment and selection processes, I am responsible for decision processes which ensure that applicants receive the correct admissions decisions and aid letters. These project areas are significant to Barnard's enrollment management success. I strongly believe in clear, two-way communication. When leading teams, I aim to set clear expectations of individual and collective goals. My teams know that they can come to me with ideas and questions, so that we can brainstorm solutions together (I pride myself on being reachable); however, I do also believe in coaching, so I ask my team members

for their ideas for solutions so I can listen to their thought processes before I share my own. For the AP Committee, I implemented a Slack channel to facilitate communications across time zones, particularly to share NACAC updates with the group. I am deeply humbled that the majority of the AP committee members with expiring first terms have chosen to re-apply for the AP committee during my tenure. I am detail-oriented, so when running meetings, I set an agenda and ensure all members are engaged and understand our next steps. Feedback is important for my development and understanding of my performance, so when being managed, I am appreciative of feedback and opportunities to ask questions. As a manager, I am responsible for my team's growth through check-ins and annual evaluations. I also earned a management development program certificate.

**Name your three most impactful takeaways from the December 2020 DEIJ 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?**

Advancing the conversation around DEIJ within International ACAC is my greatest motivation for wanting to continue on the Board. While the Board has made some strides, I am eager to see even more perspectives on the Board/on committees and for us to work towards an action plan. I was involved in conversations that led to the DEIJ Organizational Assessment Report. (1) With only 17% of members completing the survey, we must understand why so few members are engaging. What barriers exist to being a voice at the proverbial table? Who is not being heard? How can we elevate historically excluded perspectives? (2) The survey results also demonstrate that BIPOC members showed the lowest satisfaction with the association compared to their white peers. The data shows BIPOC members do not feel they have equal opportunity for leadership or feel their perspectives are welcome. As a woman of color, I ensure the Board leans into uncomfortable conversations. In 2020, I attended NACAC's Guiding the Way to Inclusion for International ACAC. I co-authored the Board's Statement on Systemic Racism and Injustice, in which we pledged to "elevate underrepresented and unheard voices... to ensure non-US centric perspectives as well as points of view of members who identify as people of color, are part of the greater conversation" and to educate ourselves and members on "white supremacy, global racism, cultural competency, and anti-racism." (3) Advancing the report's recommendations means dismantling systemic barriers by increasing the opportunities for member engagement and thoughtfully inviting underrepresented voices to engage.

### **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.**

Having led the transition from the CEPP to the Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission as your current VP for Admissions Practices (AP), I thank our community for trusting me during this uncertain time. I contributed to NACAC conversations that created the current Guide to amplify international voices. NACAC appointed me to the National AP Committee, which writes the Guide; in that space, I promise to be an advocate and a resource for you. NACAC sees our AP committee as an example among affiliates for AP's future. My AP Committee shifted International ACAC's policies/procedures' focus from enforcement to education. We have led ethics presentations and webinars and we are translating the Guide into other languages to reduce barriers to ethical practice. I have worked in international admissions for eleven years at Swarthmore and Barnard and earned an Ed.M. in Higher Education from Harvard. My love for International ACAC has spanned my career and various committees: AP, Membership, Governance & Nominating, Scholar Mentors, and Task Force on Agents. I co-chair the committee which created free Financial Aid forms for low-income students. If re-elected, I will advocate for ethics member training and member resources to encourage members to understand NACAC's Guide. As a woman of color and daughter of an international student, I believe we can only act ethically if we do so with DEIJ at the heart of discussions regarding best practices. I hope to continue sharing my voice in advancing DEIJ conversations towards action and in raising Guide awareness.