

Admission Trends in Central America: An Interactive Forum for Counselors and University Representatives



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The Americas 2026

Welcome!

High School Counselors: Please sit at seat with a yellow post-it.

University Representatives: Please sit at a seat with a green post-it.



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Like Me

The speaker shares a personal truth or experience

Anyone in the audience who relates stands up and calls out, "Like me!"



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Goal of the Session

Review trends of applicants to the United States from Central America.

Engage in conversation among College Counselors and Admissions Representatives to identify practical strategies for strengthening school-to-university partnerships.



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How did this session come about?

Lack of university to Nicaragua

Increase in student interest when
universities visit



The poster features the American Nicaraguan School (ANS) logo at the top left, which includes the text "AMERICAN NICARAGUAN SCHOOL" and "1944". The main title "ANS Welcomes WREN Tours University Fair" is prominently displayed in green and orange. Below the title, a grid of university logos is shown, including Rollins, PennState, Indiana University, Florida Tech, Hult, TCU, Villanova, Western, Lynn, Lakehead, University of Florida, University of Victoria, Full Sail, John Cabot University, Trinity, and Anáhuac Cancún. A green "Join Us!" button is positioned above the event details. The details include the date "Wednesday, September 25th", the time "11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.", and the location "Science & Innovation Center". A cartoon tiger is illustrated on the left side of the poster, and the "We're ANS" logo is on the right.

**ANS Welcomes
WREN Tours
University Fair**

Rollins PennState INDIANA UNIVERSITY FLORIDA TECH HULT
TCU VILLANOVA WESTERN LYNN LAKEHEAD
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA FULL SAIL JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY TRINITY
SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY ANÁHUAC CANCÚN

Join Us!

Wednesday, September 25th
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Science & Innovation Center

We're ANS



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Data from Nicaragua

Survey sent to 16 private schools in Managua

30% response rate

Limitations with data but we can still glean insights

Average graduating class size is 53 students



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Data from Nicaragua

Application Rate: 81% to 100% of graduating seniors at leading institutions express interest in and apply to U.S. universities.

Matriculation Rate: Drops by 10% to 30% upon actual enrollment.

Primary Cause: Cost & Financial Aid Limitations for non-U.S. citizens.



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Expanded the survey



28 AASCA Schools

14 Other comparable schools in
Central America



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Data from High School Counselors in Central America

Number of schools responded: 17

Countries Responded:

Nicaragua (5), Costa Rica (4) Honduras (4) Panama (2) Guatemala (2)

Class Size:

Average size: 51

Range of 20 and below to large graduating classes (80–120 students).



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Insight 1: Application Interest

Expressed Interest Range	Number of Schools	Percentage of Sample
11% – 30% (Low)	3	~18%
31% – 50% (Moderate)	2	~12%
51% – 70% (Substantial)	6	~35%
71% – 100% (Overwhelming)	6	~35%

In 70% of the surveyed schools (12 of 17), a clear majority (over 50%) of graduating seniors express interest in studying in the U.S.



Insight 2: Application Interest vs. Matriculation Rate

Matriculation Rate: Drops by 10%–30% across almost every institution (except two)

Primary Driver: Cost of Attendance & Financial Aid for Non-US Citizens.

Counselors consistently noted that non-US citizens struggle to secure institutional aid/scholarships, which ultimately prevents them from matriculating even after being admitted.



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Insight 3: Why Students Choose US Universities

US Citizenship: A significant portion of Central American international school students hold US citizenship or have immediate family residing in the US.

Academic Flexibility & System Comfort: Parents and students feel comfortable with the US higher education structure, valuing the flexibility to switch majors, explore double majors/minors, and access world-class academic rigor.

Familiarity: Many students regularly visit the US for vacation or summer enrichment programs, making the transition feel closer to home.



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Insight 4: What Students Value in College Choice

Academic reputation & Return on Investment (ROI).

Career Services & post-graduation work opportunities (OPT/CPT).

Welcoming, diverse, and inclusive international environments.



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Insight 5: Primary Barriers & Student Concerns

Financial Aid & Scholarships: Top concern by a massive margin.

Post-Graduation Visa/Residency Pathways: Students want clarity on how degree programs translate to work experience abroad.

Student Visas & Political Climate: While most students successfully obtain F-1 visas, growing anxiety exists regarding visa security, ICE policies, and overall safety/stability.



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Now that we have
some insight, let's
discuss!



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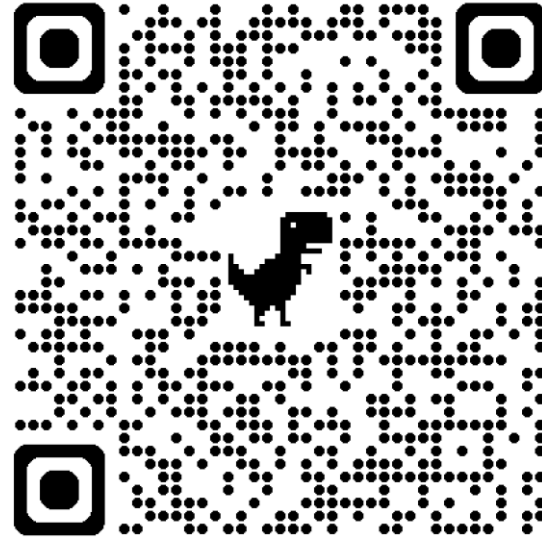
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Discussion

There are four discussion questions.

Please take notes either on the template or on paper.

I will gather the feedback and include them in the session notes.



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Discussion

Counselors frequently see students with high interest in U.S. study, but cost remains a primary barrier.

How can high school counselors and university reps better collaborate to align financial expectations?

Food for Thought: How does applying ED affect the financial barrier?



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Discussion

Our survey reflects that high-school visits by college reps impact student interest.

What can high school counselors do to support more in person visits by representatives?

What structures within visits are most impactful?



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Discussion

When families ask, 'Is a U.S. education worth the investment given the cost and visa landscape?', how does your school articulate its career outcomes and return on investment to ease those concerns?



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Discussion

If you could give secondary school counselors in Central America one piece of actionable advice to share with their seniors this fall, what would it be?



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Share Out

What is the most impactful insight from your discussion?



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Bringing it all together

Direct Connections & Open Communication

The Power of Campus Visits

Counselor-to-Counselor Knowledge Sharing



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