



2025 Executive Board Election Candidate

Vice President for Professional Development

Name: Marsha Oshima

Title: University Guidance Counselor

Institution: International School of Geneva, La Grande Boissiere

Location/Region: Switzerland/Europe

Member Group: Secondary

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 am honored to be the current Vice President of Professional Development and would like to serve for another term to continue to grow our current activities and develop initiatives that serve more members. Becoming VP for PD in 2022, I was motivated first to strengthen and refresh our mainstays: the Pre-Conference Institute, Bus Tour and Webinars. Additionally, increasing participation and reaching members with different means to access our events is a priority. Finally, our membership is growing in numbers and diversity which means training and professional upskilling needs are changing. I would like to take what I have learned in the role to pursue new approaches to our current programs and potentially new types of PD activities.

The PD Committee has worked to make current activities stronger, identify new topics and rethink the basics. If given the chance, I will use my experience to continue to lead the committee's work. I am motivated by a service mindset to help members with their daily job responsibilities, but also to grow as professionals in their long-term careers. International ACAC was my main source of professional training when I first became a university counselor and I continue to learn with each event or webinar I attend. I wish to help ensure our organization serves as many members as possible as it has benefited me.

I thrive on helping others find connections and information. Prior to my current role, I served on the DEI, conference planning and Governance and Nominations committees and I have

been a presenter at several annual conferences. Through these committees I saw the power of our members' mutual support and professional generosity. International ACAC excels through our volunteers. My experience in these different roles gives me a strong understanding of the organization and I can bring ideas to reality.

The Professional Development Committee cannot drop the ball on our work. The committee runs both free and paid activities and there is an obligation to provide the strongest possible content. At the same time, with the support of an amazing small professional headquarters staff, the content of nearly all PD activities is donated by members who volunteer. The committee has an important responsibility and I feel my record of volunteerism and leadership will support the continued growth of the committee's work.

Detail experiences that have equipped you with skills and insights applicable to the position you're applying for, including your leadership philosophy and strategies for effectively managing and leading a volunteer committee, emphasizing communication, collaboration, and recognition, and transferable accomplishments.

I am action and results oriented and excel at project management. I have led volunteer teams within International ACAC and with other groups whose members are located in multiple countries.

Regardless of my formal role, I work to anticipate what needs to be done and how. This includes thinking through the overall goal, the steps to make it happen and in the end rolling up my sleeves to help get the work done. Through such past projects such as overseeing the Pre-Conference Institute or being part of a conference planning committee, I am skilled in both understanding the overall strategic vision and breaking down the work to achieve it. As a former member of the Governance and Nominating Committee I learned much about the policies and procedures that form the base of International ACACs work. The past 2+ years on the Executive Board have solidified my understanding and now I am a frequent and confident voice to not only promote professional development goals, but also to contribute to the Board Restructuring that will improve services and advocacy for members.

I encourage and support ideas and approaches suggested by others. I approach leadership of Professional Development as establishing communications, structures and practices that encourage individuals to give the time and expertise that they are able. I pursue new ideas which may include new speakers, new topics, and ways to connect other organisations. When the webinar lead on the Professional Development committee proposed aiming for 2 webinars per month or one of the Pre-Conference Institute coordinators created a detailed work plan template, I used my role as Vice President to help implement their ideas. I worked out administrative coordination with International ACAC headquarters staff, pulled in other committees or volunteers and advised my committee on other events or organizational work that might overlap and propose ways to improve our approach. And importantly, I work to give credit to my committee and build leadership pathways for others, including formalizing roles such as the Pre-Conference Institute Director.

I also volunteer in leadership positions with other organizations: one working with HALI students and another serving the global international counselor network. Through both of these experiences, I have broadened my understanding of the needs of professionals in

different world regions and built relationships with individuals and organizations that benefit PD.

Outline your comprehension of the role you are applying for, specifying priority areas, overall vision and challenges that you would like to address, and innovative solutions you would like to implement, while acknowledging current practices or programs you feel are effective.

The role of VP for Professional Development leads a committee that can reach members in tangible ways to do their jobs better, to find new professional resources, to build their careers and to gain skills from networks at the local, regional and international levels. If given the responsibility to serve another term, my priority areas will be:

To find improved and new ways to reach more members through adding relevant and needed training topics to our current events; improved or new ways to deliver PD; and, growing the volunteer network of presenters and trainers.

To better support members who have limited resources for PD, including exploring additional online activities and collaboration or partnership with other organizations.

Through PD activities, enhancing the sense of community, collegiality and collaboration for which International ACAC is known and respected.

The strength of the PD events and programs are through member volunteers and their expertise. Collaboration, shared knowledge and the spirit of generosity are what makes our PD exceptional. The PD committee has worked to broaden the topics covered, focusing on the base of university advising and admissions while also adding new topics that are often based in AI and the changing needs and expectations of students. More information is available from many sources and I work with the PD committee to find the topics our organization and members are best positioned to offer.

International ACAC has updated technology approaches such as the new website platform. Some of our members are recognized leaders in using new technologies. At times the speed of information and technology changes is overwhelming. I plan to work with the committee to continue to seek feedback from members about how we can help them navigate their daily work through the PD activities we design. This may also include collaboration or partnerships with other organizations.

I have learned over my current term as Vice President that the role is in part project manager, air traffic controller, communications and relationship manager and emergency responder. No task big or small can be ignored. I will continue to develop the processes, written guidelines to sustain and grow our PD work, build leadership so that committee members who wish to take larger roles have a path, and finally continue to foster an atmosphere for raising new ideas to meet our members' professional needs.

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.

Lowering the temperature in college admissions occupies my thinking often these days. Students are feeling increasing pressure in the application process as they may consider multiple study options in the face of what is, or appears to be, more competition and challenges. International ACAC members feel the weight acutely as the professionals who accompany students through their admissions journey. At times it feels like a fight for offers and funding with a growing sense of competition, feelings of status, fear of missing out and comparison.

Professional development needs continue to grow. We always need the core type of training to understand the basics of admissions practices and processes and how to best use the tools available to benefit students. But, I see increased needs from our members to refine their approaches to emotionally support, reassure and guide students. At the same time members are voicing the importance of their own well-being. Keeping kindness, care and mutual support as an underlying guide to all professional development work is necessary. I am heartened to see many members raising these issues and contributing to the discussion. Professional Development should give more than the tools and knowledge to apply to college. PD provides increased networks for members, a feeling of connectedness to the larger field, sounding boards, and shared resources – all of which can help us get through the hard days and celebrate the successes.

Explain how you would leverage the position to contribute to International ACAC's strategic plan, aligning your goals with the organization's three pillars: enhancing member experience globally, clarifying the international brand, and optimizing internal operations.

When I started in the Vice President role in 2022, I attended the annual conference in New Mexico, the first fully in-person conference post-COVID. I was awed and inspired by the work previous Executive Board members had done in creating and presenting a renewed Strategic Plan.

Professional Development is key as a service to all members and a significant part of a current strategic priority to enhance the membership experience globally. The PD committee exists to serve all members to become better professionals. It is one of key ways any member can engage and benefit. I plan to continue working with the committee and the Executive Board to see how we can reach more members through online or asynchronous training. For in-person events, I will devote committee work to promote existing bursaries and support for members to attend.

We are a globally respected organization and our “brand” is known for being ethical and trustworthy. Other organizations seek to collaborate with us. Part of the strategic plan is to embody inclusivity. How we present professional development and who from other organizations we invite to help us impacts our brand. We can always do better to find members who are speakers and trainers with different voices and experiences and from different sectors and world regions.

The PD committee runs events and training. We cannot do it without the work and expertise of International ACAC's professional staff at our headquarters. All PD activities involve work by headquarters. It is critical for the Vice President to not only communicate well with HQ, but

also to develop policies and practices within the committee to help them help the US. The Vice President has visibility across other committees through working with other Vice Presidents and it's part of the job to be aware and proactive. It is not a role where one can wait to be told or asked. I have been and will continue to be an active voice on the Executive Board and implementing the strategic plan through the work of my committee, my collaboration with the other Board members and seeking input and reactions from the wider membership.