



2025 Executive Board Election Candidate

Vice President for Professional Development

Name: Anna Wise

Title: Associate Dean of Admission, Director of International Recruitment

Institution: Hamilton College

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

Member Group: Post-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 remember attending my first international conference in 2015. At the time, I was a one-woman #TeamInternational, working in a basement office for a regional liberal arts college. I was responsible for recruitment, admission, immigration support, and even picking up students at the airport. I was out of my depth, but at my first international conference, I found my people. I left that conference determined to learn all I could and, as soon as possible, to share with others. My favorite part of this job has always been the collaboration and free sharing of knowledge that comes from my colleagues.

Fast forward to more recent times—I have worked for four very different types of universities in the United States and had the opportunity to join more than 20 presentations at conferences in eight different countries. I have held leadership and training roles with NAFSA, StudyMaryland, and IACAC, where I serve on the Advocacy and Outreach Committee, as well as a member of the Pre-Conference Faculty. In these functions, I have worked on the coordination of conferences, calls for proposals, and the review of submissions. Recently, I had the opportunity to be a lead coordinator for the Upstate New York International Counselor Tour, offering counselors from around the world the opportunity to visit 10 of the outstanding institutions that make Upstate New York such a great place to study.

Throughout my career, it is safe to say that I have been privileged to enjoy many opportunities

for professional development. As I take advantage of these opportunities, I have tried to empower and encourage others in the field. If I am granted this role, it will be a great honor and challenge, but one that I will relish. This field has given me so much, and I am eager to continue making my own contributions. Finally, in the past year, I have transitioned to a remote role, which will provide me with increased flexibility and accessibility to take on the time commitment and responsibilities of this position.

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.

My strategy for professional development is to focus on the “why” as well as the “what.” If we can supplement the sharing of our knowledge with an understanding of why we make certain choices and policies, then our conversations will be more memorable and lasting. Anyone who knows me also knows that I am a practical person: when I approach a topic, I want to ask practical questions and offer candid, actionable solutions.

Between presentations, travel, and hosting counselor tours and programs, I collaborated with more than 70 different universities and hundreds of high schools around the world this fall alone. I am a very organized person, and I work remotely, which means that I have the space and capacity to be accessible to members of my committees. My spreadsheet game is on point. If selected for this role, members of my committees can expect prompt, candid, and respectful communication and feedback as we strive to deliver the best professional development opportunities possible to our diverse and ever-evolving field.

Our field and our world have changed significantly in the past decade, but I believe we need more candid, practical conversations about both the “what” and the “why” now more than ever. If I am selected for this role, I will do my best to keep these values central, ensuring that every member of our organization and community has the opportunity to experience the same connection, inspiration, and growth that I have enjoyed.

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.

Early in my career, I received the advice: “If you want to learn about something, submit a proposal on it.” I have taken this with me and shared it with colleagues and friends I have met since then. So many of us feel like we need to have all the answers in order to comment on a topic, and the reality is that each of us has something to contribute that can help the field understand complex and nuanced topics from new angles.

Before joining the IACAC Pre-Conference Faculty, I was a member of the NAFSA TrainerCorps. I learned a lot as part of the TrainerCorps, but I also found it to be rigid. Each training session had multiple syllabi, power points ready to go and a bullet point script for the

role of each trainor. When I offered a session, I could draw from my experience to answer questions, or as examples, but the content was all conceived largely without any input from me or from the main corps. Coming to the Pre-Con, I found a refreshing amount of latitude was provided. We were given outlines and copies of the previous year's sessions, but largely left to our own devices (with some helpful check ins and guidance) to produce content that we found relevant and helpful. I think a combination between the two is critical to the success in developing a curriculum for a conference: There needs to be structure, an overall plan with themes, balance of voices/expertise and cognizance about some areas of interest in the field that will help our members to grow. There also needs to be room for presenters to innovate, and share their interpretations and perspectives on a topic. Part of this role will be offering the support and structure needed to ensure a balanced and comprehensive vision with offerings that will appeal to members in various contexts, representations and levels of their careers. With IACAC members hailing from more than 140 countries, I think it is imperative that a main aspect of encouraging new involvement and perspectives is the amplification of our global voices. I have appreciated the opportunity, in recent years, to attend sessions highlighting members from LATAM, Africa, Asia and Oceania, and I have enjoyed being part of the planning group for regional IACAC conferences, culminating in attending two this fall. I think this is a crucial angle for our association, and it is something I will amplify if I am selected for this role.

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.

At a recent regional conference with colleagues and friends, I asked a question about what colleges were doing to prepare for the new U.S. administration. I was struck by the first response: "Well, what did we do during the last Trump administration?" As I looked around the room at 70 colleagues, I realized that probably only a third of them had been in the field in 2016.

At the same time, our early application numbers for international students were low this year—so much so that our leadership raised concerns that students might not apply due to the political climate in our country. My answer? "Students and families are paying attention, but they have grown up in times of intense transition and change. They don't take anything for granted. As they consider their international education destination, they are likely taking their time to see what happens in the U.S. while also navigating political shifts, visa changes, and challenges worldwide. The students will still apply; they will just wait until the last moment when they can make the most informed decision possible." Sure enough, our international applicant pool is 10% higher this year than last.

These two anecdotes represent what I think we need to advocate for: international students are at the center of an increasingly complex, polarized, and confusing global landscape. We need to remember the lessons we gained from earlier political transitions and use them to support our students as they bravely head out into the world to pursue their education. This requires finding ways to discuss complex topics without taking sides, arguing, or becoming defensive. How do we sort through rumors and find the truth? How do we educate ourselves on topics that may not have clear or objective answers? If we can't find ways to navigate sensitive topics and develop practical approaches, how can we expect our students to do so?

If I am selected for this role, I will work to provide space for communication, discussion, listening, and practicality. I will seek to bridge knowledge from past experiences with the crucial new voices in our field. There is a lot happening in the world that we cannot predict or control, but community and understanding will help us support our students on their journeys.

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.

Over the years, I have volunteered with several professional organizations and worked for four different universities with vastly different office structures. Navigating organizations, systems, and bureaucracies is not everyone's favorite part of their job. However, understanding systems—and how they allow us to set priorities, values, and goals—is crucial in any context where one hopes to make an impact. I will use my role to help develop pipelines for new generations of thought leaders and practitioners in our field. Optimizing operations leads to a stronger understanding of the IACAC brand, which will help enhance global experiences. All of this relies on professional development that encourages and amplifies voices from all backgrounds. I will support the IACAC strategic plan by encouraging and developing opportunities for new and underrepresented voices in our field. By ensuring programming with global content, we will strengthen our membership and the pathways for future leaders in our organization and industry. If selected, I will do all I can to support the strategic plan while also building bridges for the next generation of leadership.