

# 2019 Executive Board Candidates

## President-elect Megan O'Rourke



Assistant Director of Regional Recruitment  
Marquette University

**Education:**

B.A. in Journalism, Butler University

**IACAC Member:** 13 years

**IACAC Activities:**

- Mentorship Committee (2010–2017)
- IL College Fair Committee (2016–Present)
- National College Fair Committee: Member (2010–2011, 2013–2016, 2017, Co-chair (2018–Present)
- Summer Institute Committee (2011–2015, 2017–Present)
- Credentials Committee (2013–Present)
- Nominating Committee (2011–2012, 2017–2018)
- Ad Hoc Leadership Manual Committee (2014–2016)
- Media Communications Co-chair (2010–2015)
- Executive Board Secretary (2012–2014)
- Executive Board NACAC Delegate Director (2015–2018)
- Annual Conference: Committee Involvement (multiple years), Registration and Hospitality, First Timers', Evaluations, On-site, Current Logistics Co-chair
- James A. Alexander Newcomer Award Recipient (2011)
- Molly K. Arnold President's Service Recognition Award Recipient (2014)

**NACAC Activities:**

- Member 10 Years
- Communications Committee (2017–Present)

**Other Professional Activities:**

- CARR: Member (2009–present), Luncheon Chair (2010–2012, 2014–2015), President (2015–2017)

## Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

That's a big question! I feel supported and excited by the fact that we have such strong committee chairs, board members, and active and engaged members who want to continue learning and growing within IACAC. Ultimately, I see IACAC's role as a way to connect—not just members but connect with opportunities for education and development.

Considering this idea of connecting, I think it's important that we then provide members with experiences that are informative, educational, help them learn about themselves, grow in their leadership skills, and network with other members. That, in turn, ultimately benefits the students we serve as they find their path to their best postsecondary option.

One of the things I noticed in review of the Ad Hoc Financial Surplus committee's work is that many members want these things I mention above, plus additional educational opportunities, ways to attend conferences, and the option to create new committees and chances to engage in outreach. I think this speaks to how invested our membership is in making sure they can be the best resource possible for the students they serve. I see my role as a facilitator to make these things happen. I hope to use that survey data to inform decisions about providing access and creating new committees or programs so we can serve all members. I firmly believe in collaboration, brainstorming new ideas, and finding new ways of doing things. I'm thrilled at the chance to do so in the next few years! Finally, I hope to lead by serving. An organization is only as strong as its members, and the board can do its best work by serving the needs of all members.

## If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

I've been lucky enough to be a member of IACAC since 2006, and actively involved since I moved to Illinois in 2009. In this time, I have helped create the online version of the IACAC newsletter, *The Admissions Essay*, assisted with the renovation of the IACAC website, mentored new admissions professionals at Summer Institute, volunteered during the NACAC fair at Navy Pier, done many evening presentations at area high schools and helped coordinate the creation of the IACAC Leadership Manual. These experiences, along with co-chairing the Media Communications committee and the National College Fair committee have taught me so many things: patience, grace under pressure, leadership skills, effective collaboration, and how to work with a wide variety of personalities. Serving as Secretary and Delegate for IACAC helped me realize the small details are important, communication is key, and that everyone should have a say in the work we do. I feel grateful to have been able to participate in so many different areas within our organization. All of these things, coupled with my time serving our conference committee and CARR president, have prepared me for the work that will come in the next three years. Planning a CARR luncheon is just like planning a conference, right?!

Volunteering for IACAC, CARR, and NACAC has become a passion of mine and something I truly find rewarding. My time in IACAC has truly allowed me to develop into the person and professional I am today. I've worked with amazing people who have taught me invaluable lessons and have become friends with many I consider family. I feel confident, excited, and prepared to take what I have learned and represent IACAC as the next President-Elect!

## Treasurer-elect Eric Ruiz



Director of Undergraduate Admissions  
University of St. Francis

### Education:

B.B.A. in Accounting, University of St. Francis  
M.B.A. in Management, University of St. Francis

**IACAC Member:** 10 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Executive Board Council Team Director (2012–2014)
- Executive Board NACAC Delegate Director (2016–2018)
- James A. Alexander Newcomer Award Recipient (May 2011)
- Middle Management Participant (2012, 2018, 2019)
- National College Fair—Chicago Co-chair (2011–2012)
- Committee Member (2010–Present)
- Mentorship Committee (2009–2014), Match of the Year (2009), Mentor (2010–2017)
- Summer Institute Committee (2009, 2010, 2012, 2019)
- Annual Conference: Attendee (2008–present), Committee Member (2009–Present), Program Committee (2015–2016), On-site Committee (2016–2017)
- Leadership Manual Ad Hoc Committee (2014–2016), Co-chair (2015–2016)
- Scholarship Committee (2014–2017)
- Illinois Regional Fair Committee Chair (2018–Present)
- IRF Committee (2011–2014, 2018)
- Credentials Committee (2015–2016)
- Sharing the Dream Committee (2014–2018), Co-chair (2015–2016)
- Inclusion, Access, and Success Committee (2016–2017)
- Budget Surplus Ad Hoc Committee (2017–Present)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 8 years
- National Conference Attendee (2010, 2012–Present)

### Other Professional Activities:

- Executive Board of the Hispanic Leadership Coalition (Feb. 2019–Present)

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

Within this role I hope to continue pushing IACAC's mission by ensuring there is clear transparency between IACAC and its committees that are working towards its mission. In order for IACAC to give attention to access and equity for all students, its committees need to be confident in prioritizing their time and efforts towards this goal. My hope is to ensure them with that confidence and to help them have a clear understanding of what they have to work with financially, from start to finish.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

I love numbers. I enjoy working with numbers in my current position everyday. I just finished fixing our Admissions and International Admissions budget in a way where my staff can understand how money works and how to appropriately plan for the future. I believe, if elected, I can transition that same transparency with the Treasurer position. With new committee chairs coming in and moving out constantly, bringing in a plan to have each committee understand how their budgeted money is used can only continue to benefit the committee and, therefore, IACAC as a whole. My degree is in Accounting, so I guess it's in my nature to have fun with these numbers and point out the possibilities and show any opportunities as soon as they arise.

## Delegate Director—Secondary Becki Bellito



College & Career Counselor  
Vernon Hills High School

### Education:

B.A. English/Secondary Education, University of Illinois at Urbana—Champaign;  
M.A. School Counseling, Concordia University Chicago

**IACAC Member:** 4 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Bus O'Fun: Participant (2017), Committee Chair (2018–Present)
- Annual Conference: Attendee (2015–2018), Entertainment Committee Co-chair (2018), First Timers' Luncheon Table Host (2018), Presenter (2015)
- Plane O'Fun Participant (2018)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 3 Years
- Conference Attendee (2016–2018)

### Other Professional Activities:

- Lake County Counselors Association Executive Board Member (2015–2016 School Year)
- The Academy for College Counseling 101 & 201

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

I am honored to be a candidate for Delegate Director; I value the possibility of joining the IACAC Executive Board and advocating for the best interest of students in the postsecondary planning process. I would utilize the role of Delegate Director as an opportunity to learn about issues facing our profession, educating other counseling professionals about these issues, and working with IACAC to enact change that promotes ethical practices and benefits the students we serve. The mental health of high school students is a topic widely discussed in secondary education. Anxiety and depression are on the rise amongst adolescents for many reasons. I think it is important to look at ways that we as counseling professionals can ease the anxiety associated with the college admissions/postsecondary planning process. This will require analyzing many of the other issues on the forefront of our profession: application deadlines, standardized testing, and the rising cost of college education, for example. All issues must be examined through a lens seeking equity and access for all students, and IACAC must continue to find ways to support students no matter their socioeconomic background, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, or citizenship status.

IACAC is an organization of professionals serving students and families as they navigate the college admissions process; our greatest impact comes in our ability to consistently improve educational opportunities as they relate to our work. When I invest in an IACAC membership, the students on my caseload benefit indirectly. The focus on professional growth is, and should continue to be, the greatest impact our organization will make to its members. We are in a new age of technological tools like Facetime and Google Hangout that can be leveraged to connect with colleagues in different zip codes to share ideas. These examples are not just voices on the other end of a conference call, they allow for human connections through video and real-time interactions that webinars cannot provide. I believe this type of technology can increase value for our members and allow for more diverse participation in our programs.

## Becki Bellito continued

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

I have spent my 17-year career in various roles within the high school setting. My work as a teacher, counselor, and college and career counselor has provided me with a deep understanding of the issues facing secondary educators, students, and families. Serving as a delegate director would enable me to provide a voice to the experiences of secondary education constituencies as they relate to postsecondary planning.

IACAC has provided me with numerous professional development and leadership opportunities that have fostered my passion and validated the importance of the work we do as counseling professionals. My enthusiasm for this profession and the mission of IACAC

would be reflected in everything I do as a delegate director. I love collaborating with colleagues on the secondary and postsecondary sides of our profession, and I believe my listening and communication skills will make me an approachable and accessible member of the IACAC executive board.

Finally, I enjoy developing new ideas and finding innovative ways to solve problems. I am very adept with technology and am always looking for ways to utilize technology as a way to simplify and/or enhance aspects of my work. Our profession is continuing to evolve in its reliance on and immersion in technology, and I believe my confidence and ability to use technology is a skill that makes me especially qualified to serve as a delegate director who helps lead IACAC into the future.

## Delegate Director—Secondary Annette Braden



School Counselor  
Norris City—Omaha—Enfield High School

### Education:

B.A. Southern Illinois University—Carbondale,  
Communications and Fine Arts  
M.S.Ed. Southern Illinois University—Carbondale,  
Community Counseling Specialization (1999)  
School Counseling Specialization (2007)

**IACAC Member:** 18 years

### IACAC Activities:

- Various Annual Conference Committees (2002–2005)
- Illinois College Expo (now Regional College Fair) Committee (2002–2004)
- Coordinated the ICE program at Rend Lake College (2002–2004)
- James A. Alexander Newcomer Award Recipient (2003–2004)
- Southern District Seminar Committee (2004–Present)
- Executive Board Secretary (2004–2005)
- District Seminars: Committee Tri-Chair (2017–Present),  
Presenter—East Central & Southern District, “What is IACAC and What Can It Do for You?” (2019)
- Scholarship Committee Volunteer (2017–Present)
- Professional Connections Committee Tri-Chair (2018–Present)
- Presenter, SIUC and EIU State Articulations, Conference/Membership Promotion (Fall 2018)
- Presenter, EIU School Counselor Ed Class, Benefits of IACAC Membership (December 2018)
- Molly K. Arnold President’s Service Recognition Award Recipient (2018)
- Advocacy Day Participant (2019)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member
- Rural and Small Town Special Interest Group

### Other Professional Activities:

- National Certified Counselor
- Member, Illinois Counselor Association
- Member, Illinois School Counselor Association
- ISCA State Conference Presenter, Dealing with Student Death/Tragedy (2017)
- Member, American School Counselor Association
- Testing Coordinator (Experience with College Board and SAT Suite of Assessments)
- Senior Class Sponsor
- Collaboration with Local Community Colleges

### Considering IACAC’s mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

Should I be elected as delegate, I commit to helping uphold the strong presence Illinois ACAC has at the national level. More locally, I hope to bring awareness of IACAC’s mission, resources, and services to students and counselors/admissions reps in the southern part of our state. The Southern District is extremely underrepresented in regards to IACAC membership. I hope to assure more students in southern Illinois are served by furthering the education and professional development of those who provide for them. Furthermore, I strive to bring awareness of the issues and obstacles faced by rural students to the state and national levels in hopes to improve postsecondary options for these—and all—Illinois students.

I am also enthusiastic about the work of IACAC committees. I feel I have much to bring to the organization and would like to extend the reach of our committees’ influence. My work with the District Seminar committee has resulted in an increased number of 2019 seminars by resurrecting two programs that had dissolved over the years in an effort to reach professionals, thus students in every area of Illinois. Involvement in Professional Connections has allowed me the opportunity to promote IACAC to various populations in central and southern Illinois. I appreciate the contribution of the delegate position within committees and would honor the chance to become involved in this capacity.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

I spent 5 years as a community college counselor before taking a position as the sole counselor in a small high school 14 years ago. I truly wear all the hats under the “counseling” umbrella for my 200 students. Communication skills, a curious nature, and an outgoing personality are personal strengths I could bring to this position.

I have been active in IACAC for 18 years and take interest in exploring all the opportunities our organization provides that pertain to my role as a high school counselor. I also feel it is my responsibility as a member to advocate for our organization and build membership, consequently improving the secondary to postsecondary transition experience for students across the state. I have experience with IACAC committees and feel I could bring valued service as a liaison.

More importantly than all the above, however, is the passion I have for what I do. I strongly believe it is crucial, not to mention enjoyable, to collaborate with other experts in our field who serve as resources in our mission to guide students in their life’s journey to success and fulfillment.

Should I be elected as delegate, I commit my skills and qualities to the mission of IACAC. I am excited at the prospect of growing my own experiences and skills through further service.

## Delegate Director—Secondary

# Tom Shorrock



Post High School Counselor  
New Trier High School

### Education:

B.A. Miami University, Oxford, OH, (1994)  
M.P.A. University of Illinois, Chicago, IL, (2002)  
M. Ed. Loyola University, Chicago, IL, (2008)

**IACAC Member:** 19 years

### IACAC Activities:

- Admissions Practices Committee: Member (2005–2014), Co-chair (2006–2010)
- Strategic Planning Committee Member (2014–2015)
- Annual Conference: Session Presenter and Moderator (2006, 2008, 2010–2014), First Timer's Committee Co-chair (1998–2000), Program Committee Co-chair (2006)
- Executive Board (1998–2000, 2006–2010)
- Newsbrief Author "Two Sides of May 1st: Ethical Decisions for Students" (2010)
- Executive Board NACAC Delegate Director (2006–2009)
- Current Trends and Future Issues Committee Member (2007–2009)
- Summer Institute: Faculty Member (1997–2000), Committee Co-chair (1998–1999), Presenter "Ethical Issues in College Admissions" (2007–2011)
- Mentorship Program Participant (1998–2000)
- North and West Chicago District Seminar Committee Member (1998–1999)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 15 years (2003–Present)
- Delegate (2006–2009)

### Other Professional Activities:

- The Academy for College Admissions Counseling, Faculty Member (2009–Present)
- College Board National Forum Presenter: "Rules of Engagement: Partnering to Maintain Integrity of the Process" (October 2016)
- University of Pittsburgh Counselor Advisory Board (2016–2018)
- Ohio University Counselor Advisory Board (2013–Present)
- Lake Forest College Counselor Advisory Board: (2014–2016)
- College Board Midwest Regional Conference Presenter, "CSI: C Student Investigation" (2009)
- CASE Summer Institute for Educational Fund Raising, Dartmouth College (2000)
- Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) (2000–2003)
- Jesuit High School College Counseling Association (2003–2006)

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

As an IACAC/NACAC Delegate, I hope to be an advocate and resource for our membership both on the high school and college sides of the desk, as well as for students and families. Most importantly, working collaboratively with professionals across the state of Illinois and throughout the country, gives us a unique opportunity to share the challenges and concerns of our students to affect change on multiple levels.

In my opinion, being a delegate is about listening, advocating, asking questions and knowing how to gather information and share that information. I have always believed that our ability to be effective in our profession relies upon fostering relationships and knowing when to take the lead and when to ask for guidance.

Each student brings his/her own talents, aspirations, abilities, background, cultures and experiences to their decision-making. And in this ever-changing process, helping families navigate the complexity is a mission we should all have as IACAC members, regardless of

position. Every student will approach their transition differently, so taking the information we share and applying that information in the counseling relationships to help students make a successful transition is paramount to our jobs.

I humbly hope to share information with counselors, students and families that help with a successful transition and be a voice when obstacles to that successful transition arise.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

If elected, I hope to rely on my professional experience on both sides of the desk over the past 22 years to guide and inform my service as a NACAC delegate and member of the Executive Board. To me, having a leadership position, regardless of the role, is about understanding needs, using resources and having vision. In the past, having served as Chair of the Admissions Practices committee, faculty member for The Academy for College Admissions Counseling and as a NACAC delegate more than a decade ago, I hope to employ my skills and qualities to inform our membership, advocate for students and families and affect change when needed. Additionally, I have always considered myself a collaborator, working closely with others, which has meant embracing and learning from diverse experiences, and learning to lead as well as follow. Being a delegate means being aware of the current trends of our profession, understanding the issues of our state association and building bridges with other state and regional associations to advance causes and concerns on the national level.

The NACAC Delegate position is an opportunity to facilitate the two-way-street for which it was designed: representing the voice of Illinois by bringing concerns and issues to the national association, and bringing back information from the national level about current trends and future issues to our state membership. In summary, relationship building, decision-making, collaboration, experience and passion are all qualities and skills that would shape my service to IACAC should I be elected as a delegate.

IACAC is a constant resource upon which I have relied throughout my sixteen years as a counselor and for which I have always considered it a privilege to serve. Thus it is an honor to have an opportunity to continue to work with our professional organization and represent our state on the national level as a delegate. I would embrace this new experience to join a team of delegates to represent our membership and address current and future issues that face our profession, as well as to vote for candidates to serve on the NACAC Board. The ever-changing national landscape of college admissions emphasizes the need for strong representation, a balanced voice, knowledge of how issues can affect our work, and most importantly how those trends and issues affect the students and families with whom we work.

Joining IACAC in 1996, I was very fortunate to have been introduced to our state association from the outset of my career. Since that time IACAC has presented so many valuable opportunities for me to grow professionally. Most recently, as a member of the admissions practices committee and former chair, I am always reminded of how much we all have to contribute to this profession through the diverse backgrounds and experiences we bring to the table. I have learned from and am inspired by the constant dedication on display day in and day out through the association. My experiences on the admissions practices committee have provided valuable insight into how ethical practices shape what we do on a day to day basis and I feel will serve me well as a delegate when issues are addressed on the assembly floor. Through the relationship building and resources inherent to being a member of IACAC, it is easy to see how the path of anyone's profession can be further enriched by volunteering your time to work with colleagues from across the state and again representing those interests on the national level and assure that our voice as a state association is heard.

I also try to always remember that one is never too experienced to learn something new and realize how important it is to not be so complacent as to miss the opportunities to embrace new challenges to grow professionally. As a delegate, if elected, I would bring a commitment to the mission of supporting counseling professionals on both sides of the desk and contribute my own perspectives to the continued growth and direction of IACAC, while keeping our leadership and membership informed of the issues concerning our profession on the state and national level. Everything we do that enhances our experiences and professionalism as counselors contributes to the well-being of the students and families with whom we work. I look forward to serving as delegate if given the opportunity.

## Delegate Director—Secondary Paul Welsh



School Counselor  
Fenton High School

### Education:

B.A., Political Science, The George Washington University  
M.A., School Counseling, Northeastern Illinois University

**IACAC Member:** 10 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Government Relations Committee Member (2013–present), Co-chair (2014–2017)
- Molly K. Arnold President's Service Recognition Award Recipient (2016)
- Springfield Advocacy Day (2015–18)
- Annual Conference Presenter (2015, 2017, 2018, 2019)
- Mentorship Program Mentor (2016–2018)
- Bike O'Fun Tour Leader (2018, 2019)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member (2013–2015)
- Imagine Grant Recipient (2013)
- National Conference Attendee (2013, 2014)
- Washington Advocacy Day Attendee (2015–18)
- Chicago National College Fair Volunteer (2014)

### Other Professional Activities:

- Leyden Parent University presenter (2018)
- The Academy for College Admission Counseling 101, 201 and 301
- UIUC Counselor Advisory Board (2011-2012)
- Active Member of Fenton Education Association
- IHSA Baseball Official
- Fenton Military Liaison
- Tour d'Admissions Participant

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

I hope to continue to serve as a student advocate in this complicated process as well as an advocate for my colleagues. High school counselors, especially those of us in public schools serving students most in need, are underrepresented in IACAC and in NACAC. This role will afford me the opportunity to speak up and advocate on behalf of my colleagues who do not have the opportunity to attend an annual conference. Many of us, especially those outside of the Chicago area, struggle to convince administrators of the importance of the work IACAC does on behalf of students. These professional school counselors simply cannot leave the building because the work we do serving students is the most important thing we do. In many cases, attending a conference in Bloomington or Louisville, Minneapolis or Itasca, is either not feasible or not encouraged.

As a Delegate Director, I will use my position to give voice to Illinois counselors. I will represent my colleagues on the Executive Board and in the NACAC Assembly. I will faithfully represent the interests of IACAC and of Illinois students. I know it sounds a bit idealistic, but in this position, I hope to influence NACAC and IACAC to continue putting the students we serve first.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

I believe that everyone, especially young adults, has the ability and the right to make decisions that impact one's own future. This core value to respect autonomous decision-making guides my practice as a school counselor, and not just in the postsecondary planning realm. As a Co-chair of the Government Relations Committee, I had the opportunity to practice this principle in the political arena.

After years of building IACAC's reputation among legislators in the Illinois General Assembly as a trusted advocacy organization, the Government Relations Committee took a big step while I served as co-chair. Over the course of two years, my colleagues and I cultivated relationships with targeted legislators and other decision-makers in Illinois government. While the politicians waffled and failed to pass a budget, we quietly passed legislation that changed Illinois law to protect student ownership of test scores. This type of advocacy work is not for everyone, but I really enjoy it. I feel just as comfortable lobbying decision-makers in the halls of power as I do listening to first-generation college students and families at school.

The NACAC Assembly functions like a legislative body, and my experience working with the Illinois General Assembly makes me uniquely qualified to serve our Association and our students as Delegate Director.

## Delegate Director—Postsecondary Christine Grotzke



Regional Admissions Manager  
Michigan Technological University

### Education:

B.A. Physics Education from Ripon College, WI

**IACAC Member:** 15 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Executive Board Treasurer (2016–2019)
- Finance Chair (2017–2018)
- Professional Development Grants Chair (2016–2017)
- Annual Conference: On-site Co-chair (2014–2016), Exhibitor Co-chair (2010), Raffle Co-chair (2008), Program Co-chair (2007)
- Middle Management Institute Attendee (2011)
- Executive Board Council Team Director (2007–2009)
- Government Relations Co-chair (2006–2008)
- Summer Institute Attendee (2003)

I have also participated as a volunteer in many other committees.

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 14 years
- Washington Advocacy Day Attendee (2007, 2008)

### Other Professional Activities:

- CARR: Member (2003–2019), Treasurer (2010–2012), Professional Development Chair (2005–2007)

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

With all the changes in timelines, and in particular to the financial aid timeline, our students are increasingly stressed during the transition process. By working together, we can establish practices that coordinate the postsecondary and secondary school requirements such that the process is simple and clear for students and their families. We can also ensure those guidelines have enough flexibility for our postsecondary institutions to ethically craft individualized practices to identify candidates that will excel and persist at our institutions and contribute to the overall vision of our organization. The two are not mutually exclusive.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

It has been a pleasure to sit on the Executive Board and the Finance Committee for the past three years. Both have given me insight into the priorities of IACAC and a passion for the mission of the organization. Hearing the updates from our current delegates and attending the NACAC Conference 4 out of the last 5 years, I feel confident that I have the background to continue the legacy of excellence the Illinois ACAC delegation has for quality contributions at the NACAC Assembly.

## Delegate Director–Postsecondary Sylvia Hernandez



Manager of Illinois Recruitment  
Michigan State University

### Education:

B.A. History (2004)  
M.Ed. Educational Leadership (2008)

**IACAC Member:** 7 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Annual Conference: Participant (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019), Presenter (2014, 2015, 2017, 2018), First Timers' Committee Co-chair (2014, 2015), Raffle Committee Co-chair (2014, 2015, 2017), Project Reach Committee Co-chair (2017), Fundraising Liaison (2018, 2019)
- Mentorship Program Mentor (2013)
- National College Fair Committee Member (2014, 2019)
- Scholarship Committee Member (2017–Present)
- Illinois Regional College Fair Committee Chair (2018–2019)
- Molly K. Arnold President's Service Recognition Award Recipient (2018)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 8 Years
- College Fair Chair Training 2010
- National Conference (Indianapolis, San Diego, Columbus, Boston, Salt Lake City): Participant (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018), Registration Volunteer (2015, 2017, 2018), Logistical Arrangements Committee (2014, 2015)
- National College Fair Committee Member (2018–Present)

### Other Professional Activities:

Ohio:

- OACAC Member (2007)
- OACAC Conference Participant (2007)

Michigan:

- MACAC Member (2007–2011)
- MACAC Conference Participant (2009, 2010)
- MACAC West Michigan National College Fair Committee Chair (2009–2013)
- MACAC Rising Star Award Recipient (2010)

Pacific Northwest:

- PNACAC Member (2015–2016)
- PNACAC Portland National College Fair Committee (2015)

Other:

- CARR Member (2011–2015, 2017–Present)
- TCRAR Member (2013–2015)
- AAROW Member (2015)

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

I am humbled to be considered for the position of Delegate Director–Postsecondary. My work with IACAC has added so much value to my professional life, development and growth. If selected for this role I will be able to learn from and with our affiliate partners across the country on a variety of issues facing our organization. I would like to increase participation in IACAC events across the state. Increasingly, we have members who are unable to leave their office, lack support to attend events or are in an underserved area. I would continue the work that was started with increasing our use of technology to allow access for the aforementioned members. I would like to look at new ways to innovate and strengthen our District Seminar programs and would want to serve as liaison to their committee. With the growing movement of free two year college tuition happening nationally, we have a need for more collaboration and support for and from two year partners. Much has been done in this arena, but it is something we must not ignore. Lastly, I would like to focus on working with the re-vamped CPS Higher Education Compact to ensure that we are meeting the needs of this population. Urban proposal sessions at conference and district seminars, collaboration between CPS, the National College Fair Committee and the Illinois College Fair committee is paramount. Continuing to reach out through membership, professional connections and our grants program will allow us to have a more robust organization that I look forward to working with.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

In addition to my job duties, I have said yes to my state affiliate organizations no matter where my job has taken me. From Michigan to Illinois to Oregon and back to Illinois I have always been supported to immerse myself in serving my state organization. These experiences show my willingness to accept change, take on challenges and new ventures, and flexibility. I continue to grow professionally by maintaining the qualities that got me started in the profession: hard work, professionalism, dedication and communication. This year I am serving as a new Co-chair on the Illinois College Fair Committee and as a member of the NACAC National College Fair Committee. These opportunities allow me to lend support, a voice and an ear to the needs from our high school constituents as well as our college partners. I feel my biggest asset is my philosophy of L.E.T. Listen, Engage discussion and Take action. I feel that these qualities will help us take on the challenges and successes that lie ahead and support our current theme of Action, Advocacy and Excellence that are driving this conference.

## Delegate Director–Postsecondary Brian Hodges



Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions  
University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

### Education:

B.S. in Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (2002)  
Master of Public Administration, University of Illinois Springfield (2015)

**IACAC Member:** 8 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Transfer Advisory Committee (September 2018-present)
- Executive Board Council Team Director (June 2016–June 2018)
- Annual Conference Planning Committee (June 2016–Present), Exhibiting, Advertising, and

Sponsorship Chair

- James A. Alexander Newcomer Award Recipient (2016)
- Credentials Committee (September 2016–Present)
- Nominating Committee (September 2016–May 2018)
- National College Fair Committee (September 2015–September 2017)
- District Seminar (January 2015–January 2016, October 2018–Present)
- Summer Institute Committee (July 2014–Present)
- College Awareness and Preparation Committee (CAP) (November 2013–Present), Co-chair (July 2014–June 2016)
- Mentorship Committee (August 2013–Present)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 2 Years (2015–2017)
- National Conference Attendee (Boston, 2017)

### Other Professional Activities:

- CARR Member (2011–2017), Counselor Outreach Chair (2015–2017)

## Brian Hodges continued

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

I first became involved with IACAC because I am very passionate about helping students find their way, especially when it comes to empowering them to take control of their future. This is why I was drawn to the College Awareness and Preparation (CAP) committee. As I have grown personally and professionally, I realized our organization offers so much more to people who take advantage of it. That is why I became involved with multiple committees over the years, including the IACAC conference planning committee. I even had the honor to serve on the Executive Board as a Council Team Director from 2015–2017. One of the prouder accomplishments we had was making sure the IACAC Conference was more open to the entire state of Illinois, hence #NormalInNineteen. My hope, if I am privileged to be elected as Delegate Director, is to continue the great work our Executive Board and

membership have done to be inclusive to the entire state of Illinois and being a consistent and valuable presence at the national level.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

If I am elected, I will bring over 13 years of college admissions experience and over 8 years of involvement with IACAC. IACAC has allowed me to grow professionally with participation with the Middle Management Institute, to gain program and event planning with CAP, District Seminars, National College Fair, and Transfer Advisory committees, and become a resource for new counselors with the Mentorship and Summer Institute committees. My involvement with IACAC has allowed me to grow in a multitude of ways that I did not think was possible. I am very humbled to have the potential opportunity to continue to do this and more with IACAC.

## Council Team Director—Postsecondary Jessica Avila-Cuevas



Regional Representative  
University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

### Education:

B.A. Spanish, Monmouth College  
M.Ed. Higher Education, Loyola University Chicago

**IACAC Member:** 6 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Mentorship Program: Mentee (2012–2013), Mentor (2016–2017), Committee Member (2016–Present), Committee Co-chair (2017–Present)
- Credentials Committee Member (2018–Present)
- Sharing the Dream Conference: Attendee (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018), Committee Member (2016–Present), Committee Co-chair (2017–Present)
- Annual Conference: Attendee (2013–Present), Entertainment Committee Member (2016, 2017, 2018), First-Timers Committee Member (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), Presenter (2017, 2018, 2019)
- Summer Institute: Attendee (2012), Committee Member (2015, 2016, 2017), Presenter (2016, 2017)
- Inclusion Access & Success Committee Member (2014–2018)
- College Awareness & Preparation Committee Member (2014–2017)
- Motivate Me Presenter (2017, 2018)
- Middle Management Institute Attendee (2018)
- West & North Suburban District Seminar Attendee (2017)
- Leadership, Equity, Accountability, and Diversity (L.E.A.D.) Program Participant (2018–Present)
- Illinois Advocacy Day Participant (2018)
- James A. Alexander Newcomer Award Recipient (2018)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 2 Years

### Other Professional Activities:

- Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs, Editorial Assistant (2018–2019)
- Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE), Member and Conference Attendee (2017, 2018)
- ACT Enrollment Planners Conference Attendee (2017)
- CARR Member (2016–Present)

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

As I reflect on my experience, I have served in various committees that resonate to our IACAC's promise to serve all students and professionals within postsecondary work. It is my goal to provide support and encouragement to our IACAC membership as well as Standing Committees in order to achieve and meet our organization's mission.

Our organization serves as a hub of how we can best support and work with students and their postsecondary planning. It is important that we serve as a premier organization that can uphold these values in order to transform the lives of students, especially those who are not given the capital and resources to make an important decision to go to college or other postsecondary options. IACAC's efforts in transforming the lives of students is done by the work and dedication of our members, therefore we must recognize this as a way to applaud each other.

In addition, I would want to ensure that our members are given the opportunity to explore and engage in professional development opportunities so that they can understand current policies and trends, as well as best practices that would best support our students, families, and other constituents. Investing on the recruitment and attainment of counselors from under-resourced schools and professionals that have historically not been able to find a voice in our organization is pivotal when standing with our mission. Moreover, getting new professionals to grow their leadership potential with IACAC and establishing an action plan that would keep them engaged with IACAC should also be a priority. This way, our members can see value and validation of the work we do as well as challenge ourselves to seek growth in our professional lives.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

Ever since my initial exposure with IACAC as an attendee at Summer Institute, I knew I had to take advantage of the opportunities offered in order to grow and understand my role in college admissions. Moreover, the relationships I have established with colleagues on both sides of the desk have truly affirmed my belief on how powerful our role is with assisting students in postsecondary planning.

Serving in the Mentorship and Sharing the Dream Conference Committees concurrently as a Co-chair has allowed me to better understand this organization by working collaboratively with colleagues and establishing leadership skills that have been essential in my professional growth. From executing communications on the visibility and promotion of the #MentorshipMeetups, to connecting with community organizations in their engagement with the Sharing the Dream Conference, my work ethic and commitment to service is demonstrated in my role as Co-chair and as a member of IACAC.

In addition, I have worked for a variety of institutions with positions that are based on- and off-campus. Having experience in different university settings has allowed me to gauge on the critical role admissions plays into our institutions, stakeholders, and our constituents. Through the years, I have established strong relationships with school counselors from around our state as well as partnerships with community-based organizations.

## Jessica Avila-Cuevas continued

I understand the importance of how our work in college admission plays to historically underrepresented students. As a high school graduate of a non-selective Chicago Public School and first-generation college student, it was crucial in utilizing my school counselor for postsecondary planning and how it transformed my life to the professional I am today. Our work is vital and we should offer our expertise and advocacy for all students seeking postsecondary plans.

I am humbled to be nominated for the Council Team Director-Postsecondary position at IACAC. My dedication with IACAC is manifested through my demonstrated commitment and involvement, and it is my hope that I represent this organization well.

## Council Team Director—Postsecondary Tara Brewer



Regional Admission Manager  
Michigan Technological University

**Education:**  
B.A.

**IACAC Member:** 13 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Annual Conference: Evaluations Committee Volunteer, Raffle Committee Chair (1 Year)
- Mentorship Committee Member
- Credentials Committee Member
- Scholarship Committee: Member, Chair (3 Years)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 9 Years

### Other Professional Activities:

- CARR Member

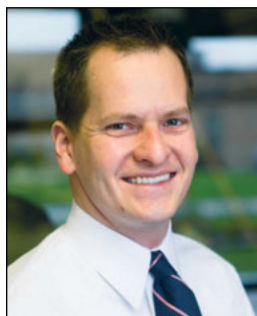
### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

I hope to be a reliable resource and support to the the committee, teams and the elected leaders by being thorough, thoughtful and helpful in my role.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

My experiences include volunteering on a variety of committees and serving in many roles throughout my time in admissions. Beginning as a tour guide for my college, to leading a team of student workers and co-chairing a committee within IACAC. I will bring these experiences along with my positive attitude to this role!

## Council Team Director—Postsecondary Steve Landgraf



Manager of Illinois Recruitment  
Michigan State University

**Education:**  
B.A. Radio/Television, Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale

**IACAC Member:** 8 years

### IACAC Activities:

- Molly K. Arnold President's Service Recognition Award Recipient (2017)
- Government Relations Committee Member (2012–Present), Co-chair, (2014–2018)
- Professional Connections Committee Member (2018–Present)
- Annual Conference: Attendee (2012–2019), First Timers' Lunch Volunteer Table Leader (2017), Presenter "Government Relations: Looking Forward" (2015), Presenter "Getting to Know the Big Ten!" (2017), Moderator "Government Advocacy 101: Playbook for 2018" (2018), Presenter "Getting to Know the Big Ten!" (2019), First Timers' Committee (2019)
- Summer Institute Attendee (2011)
- Middle Management Institute Attendee (2014)
- Springfield, IL Advocacy Day Attendee (2015–2019)
- Mentorship Program Mentor (2017–2018)

### NACAC Activities:

- Member 3 Years
- Washington, D.C. Advocacy Day Attendee (2015–2018)
- National Conference Attendee (2017)
- Featured Writer for Summer 2018 *The Journal of College Admission*, "Sparking Activism"

### Other Professional Activities:

- CARR Member (2016–Present), Communications Chair (2018–Present)
- Missouri Association for College Admission Counseling (MOACAC) Member (2018–Present)
- Lutheran Admission Council of the Missouri Synod (LACMS), Secretary-Treasurer (2013–2016)
- iMentor Volunteer Mentor (2018–Present)

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

Like many admissions professionals, I somewhat stumbled into my job as an Admissions Counselor. (Perhaps you can empathize as you read this!) I remember feeling overwhelmed in my first year in admissions. I remember sitting at my first IACAC Conference and wondering how I really fit into this world of higher education. Fast forward seven years, and I can definitely say that I wouldn't still be working in admissions without the Illinois Association for College Admission Counseling. IACAC has provided me with education, direction, and camaraderie. IACAC helped transform a new job as "Undergraduate Admission Counselor" into a career in higher education. I want to use my role as Council Team Director to inspire more IACAC members to say "yes" to taking that next step. I want to pass on that spark for creating greater opportunities for our students and our colleagues, and I know that I'll be able to do more of that as a member of the IACAC Executive Board. The personal and professional growth that we all experience through IACAC serves our institutions well. My job as an Admissions Counselor and my volunteer work within IACAC has taken me all over the state of Illinois to connect with various education professionals. I would like to help foster more collaboration and community amongst School Counselors and admissions staff throughout the state. I truly believe we can make a greater IMPACT as we work together!



## Steve Landgraf continued

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

First and foremost, I closely empathize with the Illinois students that IACAC members serve. I attended Illinois public schools from K-12th grade, and I went on to attend a public in-state college (Southern Illinois University Carbondale). I'm thankful that I received a MAP Grant to help make that college education possible. I'm proud of my Illinois roots, and I'm passionate about seeing our state's students and educational institutions flourish. During my career in higher education, I've only worked at two institutions: Concordia University Chicago & Michigan State University. I feel that my professional background affords me a unique perspective about the varied paths that our students and our colleagues take on their journey.

I've had the chance to work in admissions for two very different types of colleges, but ultimately, the vocation of serving students through their transition to postsecondary options remains the same. I'm passionate about helping to equip students with greater access to an affordable option that fits their needs after high school. To that end, I've focused much of my energy within IACAC on our Government Relations Committee (GRC) because of the impact GRC can have on shaping the funds, resources, and choices afforded to our Illinois students. As Council Team Director, I want to make a greater impact with more IACAC committees and members as we all work together to shape the vision of what IACAC can be over the next several years.

## Council Team Director—Postsecondary Omar Solomon



Admission Counselor  
Eastern Illinois University

### Education:

B.A. Communication Studies, Eastern Illinois University

**IACAC Member:** 9 Years

### IACAC Activities:

- Annual Conference: Raffle Committee (2011), Entertainment Committee (2012), Entertainment Chair (2013–2015), Presenter
- College Awareness and Preparation Committee Member (2013–2017)
- Molly K. Arnold President's Service Recognition Award Recipient (2015)
- Membership Chair (2015–2018)
- Mentorship Committee Member (2018–Present)
- College Fair Committee (2018–Present)
- Chicago District Seminar Committee (2018–Present)
- Motivate Me Volunteer
- Summer Institute Presenter

### Other Professional Activities:

- CARR Member (2017–Present)

### Considering IACAC's mission and our work with transitioning students from secondary schools to postsecondary options, what do you hope to achieve within this role?

We as an organization do so much, but we can always do more for our stakeholders and most importantly, for our students. By increasing our outreach throughout the state on both sides of the desk, we would be able to assist more students on their academic journeys. My number one goal would be to empower our great membership! We are only as strong as our membership and that membership should reflect the diversity of our peers. I would strive to incorporate new voices to get involved with IACAC from different ethnic and geographic backgrounds to help the students we interact with walk across the graduation stage when their time comes.

### If elected, what experiences, skills, and qualities do you bring to this specific position?

IACAC has truly been such an important part of my professional career, and I'm excited to have the opportunity to give back to the organization! Through my experiences with IACAC, I have enhanced my communication skills and creativity volunteering with programs such as the Annual Conference, Camp College, Motivate Me, and gained a tremendous professional development opportunity serving a three year term as one of the Chairs for the Membership Committee. If elected to this position, I promise to serve as a motivated and creative team player for our organization! Furthermore, my position at Eastern Illinois University the last eight years has provided me with a solid foundation of experience working with students from all regions of the state and different cultural backgrounds. I'm eager to take everything I know to help our organization develop as a whole and produce new leaders!