



Annette Braden

President-Elect

IACAC Member: 23 Years

Norris City - Omaha - Enfield High School

School Counselor



In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

My vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession consists of expanding membership and involvement throughout the entire state. I do recognize that we have worked at this for years, but I am excited about bringing more IACAC presence to the southern end of the state - and for the "southerners" to bring more presence to the organization. I believe it is important for us to feel and see more cohesion between the "north and south." Let's free ourselves from the divisiveness and celebrate our uniqueness and our differences so we can all work together to serve every single one of our students. My "why" here, is helping students recognize their potential through more awareness by the professionals who impact them every day. Professional development is a passion of mine and I hope to help keep all our admissions educators informed and cared for to the level our students deserve. There's Room for ALL of Illinois!

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

My professional path was a bit all over the place in my early years, but as a 24-year old mom to be, I answered the call to education and applied to graduate school. Working a full-time bookkeeping job, expecting our first child, and making the 65-mile drive to Carbondale for night classes, I committed myself to becoming a counselor. Five years and two children later, I finished my degree and was blessed to be hired at Rend Lake College. It was here I became involved in IACAC, attended conferences, and found such admiration and respect for the leadership in place during those years. I loved counseling and advisement, but jumped at the chance to return to SIU to complete the newly-revamped requirements for becoming a school counselor. In the fall of 2005, no doubt from divine intervention, the opportunity to work in a high school essentially dropped in my lap. I have been at NCOE High School ever since, where I have learned and grown as an educator, a counselor, and a person. I continued working with my much-loved Southern District Seminar team and never lost the passion for education and professional development. After my kids both began their college and career paths as engineers, I was able to get more actively involved in IACAC again and have absolutely cherished all my experiences in various committees and the delegate role. Again, I have been and continue to be so inspired by the leadership over the years. Now I find myself faced with the opportunity to take a turn on the IACAC Presidential Team. It's an opportunity I couldn't turn down and I only hope to do it justice.

Education

M.S.Ed. Community Counseling and School Counseling

Southern Illinois University- Carbondale

IACAC Involvements

- 2004-Present Co-Site Coordinator, Southern District Seminar Committee
- 2002-2005 Site Coordinator, Illinois College Exposition
- 2004 Newcomer Recognition Award
- 2017-2019, 2022-present Southern District Seminar Committee Co-Chair
- 2019- Southern and Eastern District Seminar IACAC Overview Presenter
- 2004, 2019, 2022-2024 Annual Conference Committee (Hospitality, Local Host, Registration, and/or Program)
- 2019 Annual Conference Presenter
- 2004-2005 Executive Board Secretary
- 2016-2018 Scholarship Committee
- 2018-present Government Relations Committee
- 2018, 2019, 2022 Springfield Advocacy Day
- 2017-present Professional Connections Committee
- 2018, 2019 State Articulation Conference Presenter
- 2019-2022 Delegate Director Secondary (3 year term)
- Liaison to Professional Connections (2019-2020) and District seminars (2019-2020, 2020-2022)
- 2021-2022 Chief Delegate
- 2020-present High School Counselor Professional Development Committee

Other Involvements

- Member, American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
- Member, Illinois School Counselor Association (ISCA)
- 2017 State Conference Presenter, Dealing with Tragedy and Student Death
- 2020-Present Member, ISCA/ISBE Advisory Board
- Member, National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC)
- Member, Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, Gamma Upsilon Chapter
- 2019-present
- CARR College Fair Lunch and Learn Panel 2021
- CACCA Meeting Host 2021



Rebecca Johnson

Treasurer- Elect

IACAC Member: 3 Years

University of Illinois Springfield

Associate Director of Admissions

she/her

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

I have lived and worked in higher education in Central Illinois for the past 10+ years and have loved getting to know the culture of the area. At the same time, I have seen challenges students and families face in more rural regions of the state when exploring post-secondary options. Their challenges are often different from those in more urban areas. As a member of the IACAC Board of Directors, I hope to provide a voice for the Central and Southern regions of the state so that the challenges school counselors and admissions representatives face in the area are better recognized. I also aim to encourage more counselors to become involved in IACAC in areas where membership and representation is not as strong so that going forward, their voices are an equal part of the conversation.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

I have worked in higher education for more than 15 years. One thing that has remained constant is my dedication to underserved, rural populations. The students and their families from the rural areas often present different questions and concerns than those from more urban areas and my aim is to help these students find the best post-secondary education option for them. While working in admissions at the University of Florida, I earned my Masters degree in Student Personnel in Higher Education. My primary research project was focusing on the digital divide in rural parts of Florida and how it limited students' abilities to access higher education. As I learned more and continue to learn about the challenges in rural parts of the state, my passion for serving these students to the best of my ability continues to grow and remains a primary driver in the work I do today. My family and I relocated to Jacksonville, IL in the fall of 2013, where I accepted a position at Illinois College as the Assistant Director of Financial Aid and Technology Manager. I joined the team at the University of Illinois Springfield as Associate Director of Admission in February 2021. I enjoy traveling throughout the rural areas of the state, meeting students and counselors, and learning more about the challenges they face in a post-pandemic world. I oversee our recruitment team that works in less densely populated areas of the state and love to hear about the "lightbulb" moments my counselors share when students learn more about post-secondary options and realize they are attainable. I hope to be a voice for counselors and families in less represented parts of the state as a member of the IACAC Board of Directors. I feel my background in both admissions and financial aid will provide a unique perspective and better serve everyone in the state.

Education

B.S. Elementary Education

University of Tennessee

Chattanooga

M. Ed Student Personnel in
Higher Education

University of Florida

IACAC Involvements

- College Fair Committee
 - (3 years)

Other Involvements

- University of Florida Assessment Team – Collaboration between Student Affairs and Enrollment Management: 2010 – 2013
- University of Florida Enrollment Management Steering Committee: 2011 – 2013
- University of Florida Enrollment Management accreditation committee: 2012–2013
- Harvard Summer Institute for Admissions: June 2011
- NACAC Admissions Middle Management Institute: September 2011
- SACAC (Member): Aug 2008 – Nov 2013; Presented at conference Spring 2012
- NACAC (Member): Aug 2008 – Nov 2013; Feb 2021 – present
- ILASFAA (Member): Nov 2013 – Feb 2021
- PowerFAIDS Conference presenter: 2014 – 2020



Graciela Covarrubius

Secretary- Elect

IACAC Member: 5 Years

DePaul University

Assistant Director of Admission

she/her

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

My compassion for my peers, my professional experience, and my training have been integral to creating and sustaining supportive professional cultures that uplift and connect folks to resources for success. If elected onto the Board I would be committed to providing resources for our newest members and disengaged members of the IACAC community to feel connected to our collective. Additionally, as a current co-chair for the Women in Admission SIG, I am interested in helping support and develop these groups as a space for community. IACAC has brought me immense joy and concrete resources to succeed professionally. With that said, our close-knit community can often feel insular and difficult to break into if you don't have a mentor or someone to guide you through IACAC's myriad of engagement opportunities. I was fortunate to have professionals who shepherded me and invited me in as a young professional to get involved. I would love to concretely contribute to our community by working with existing committees (NCI, SIGs, IAS, Mentorship) to increase our cross-programming collaboration and strategically invite new counselors into our profession beyond their experiences with NCI. It's important to me that everyone knows what IACAC has to offer and feel comfortable raising their hand to ask for help and support from our collective.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

I am a first-generation college graduate and Latina whose worldview and approach to admission work have been largely shaped by the challenges I faced moving through the college admission process. I've been with DePaul now for 5 years as an admission counselor and now as Assistant Director of Admission where I oversee our onboarding process for all new hires and manage a team of 6 admission counselors. As a professional, I am committed to demystifying the college admission process for the students I serve and providing educational training opportunities for new admission counselors. I am hyperaware of the rate of burnout in our profession and as a manager and mentor within our IACAC community, my interests and contributions have been largely focused on the new counselor experience. I believe that thoughtful and robust training opportunities paired with mentorship are the key to a vibrant and successful IACAC community. My involvement through IACAC has been rooted in discussions centered around challenging systemic oppression throughout our profession and processes. My greatest contribution here was in the three-part workshop series I created and led with my colleagues to provide educational opportunities for IACAC professionals on deconstructing White Supremacy in Higher Education. Beyond access work, I'm actively working to welcome new counselors to our profession through NCI. I served on the inaugural committee of NCI as it transitioned from Summer Institute and I have loved the opportunity to serve as a broker of connections and resources for new counselors. I was part of discussions with my colleagues around our curriculum development for the program and have served on panels and delivered presentations for our counselors to learn more about the ins and outs of our profession. My biggest strengths are ideation and creating a space for folks to come together and leverage our interconnectedness to learn from one another and give back to our students and our IACAC community.

Education

DePaul University

IACAC Involvements

- New Counselor Institute Committee, Member - 2020-2021, 2023-2024
- Inclusion, Access & Success Committee, Member - 2020-2021
- Facilitator, Dismantling White Supremacy in Higher Education (three-part workshop series with IAS)
- Women in Admission Special Interest Group, Co-chair - 2023-2024
- IACAC Advocacy Day, February 2020

Other Involvements

Outside of IACAC I serve on three boards aligned with my service and community organizing interests including as co-president of the Junior Board of Catholic Charities of Chicago, a member of the CHANGE Illinois board of directors, and as an Alumnae Engagement Team lead for the Chi Omega Fraternity National Headquarters.



Kimberly Zimmerman

Secretary- Elect

IACAC Member: 15 Years

Knox College

Assistant Vice President of Admissions

she/her

Education

B.A. English Writing, American Studies

Illinois Wesleyan University

M.A. Leadership in Higher Education

North Central College

IACAC Involvements

My past and current IACAC involvement includes participating on the scholarship committee, serving as a conference volunteer, presenting at the annual conference, participating in the mentorship program (both as a mentor and mentee), joining the government relations committee, and co-hosting the Western District seminar at Knox College last year.

Other Involvements

I currently serve on campus committees at my institution that focus on diversity and inclusion, and enrollment retention success. I have had previous active involvement in regional admission counseling groups in Texas, Texas ACAC, International ACAC, and I sat on the board for Study Illinois as the secretary.

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

It is easy to assume that to be involved or contribute to an organization like IACAC you have to consistently give 110% effort. I encourage people to raise their hand for whatever they have the bandwidth for. Even if it's something as small as literally raising their hand and sharing their opinion in a meeting or session to contribute to a larger conversation. I want to encourage people to not only think about those in this profession who already exist in our circles but those who exist outside of our circles. Something as simple as sitting at a new table while you eat your sandwich before a college fair, and learning something new about a professional in this field, could have a lasting impact. It is also important to encourage people to get involved, and to consistently find ways to nominate or encourage individuals to participate in conferences, seminars, committees, etc. To "pass it on." My hope is to lead by example in all of these areas. We have so many incredible minds in this profession, and I want to encourage those who haven't stepped up in the past to contribute in whatever ways they can. Additionally, through my experience living and working in western Illinois, I hope to be an additional voice for "downstate Illinois," and the needs of our IACAC community members who live and work outside of the city of Chicago and surrounding suburbs. Living in the western region, I have personally struggled to find ways to both make my voice heard and to get involved in IACAC. So much of what IACAC does seems to be in person, hosted in the Chicago suburbs, or the opportunities are perceived to be for a seemingly select group of individuals who are already actively involved. I would love to show all members of IACAC who might feel the same way that meaningful involvement is possible. To show that if you just keep raising your hand for opportunities you'll find an opportunity that works.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

I'm a first-generation college student from the southern suburbs of Chicago. Throughout my 15-year career in this field, I've helped high schoolers from all over the country and the world navigate college admissions. In my first job out of college, I worked for the Illinois Student Assistance Commission as part of the ISACorps program. As an ISACorps member, I provided financial aid, FAFSA, and college search support to low-income and/or first-generation college students. It was in that job that I first recognized the great work that IACAC does for students across the entire state. Following my time working for the state of Illinois, I made the "leap" into college admissions. Through my time in admissions I have lived in Dallas, Texas as a regional admissions counselor, overseen international recruitment at multiple institutions, traveled the country and the world over to recruit, and served in a variety of roles at three separate colleges. I currently serve as the Assistant Vice President of Admissions at Knox College and live in Galesburg, Illinois. I'm passionate about making college accessible and inclusive, and I appreciate that IACAC shares those same values. I desire to continue to push the definition of who a "good student" is for a higher education experience, to provide educational opportunities that can lead to life-changing circumstances for students, and to make society a better place by allowing opportunities for students to become critical thinkers and global citizens through what they learn within a college setting.



Tara Brewer

Board Director

IACAC Member: 17 Years

Michigan Technological University

Regional Admissions Manager



In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

Making room for all is so important because it brings rich texture to conversation, valuable insight, and creates dialogue that leads to innovation. Ideally, I hope that we move forward intentionally, being thoughtful and building up our colleagues to create new opportunities for each other and for our students. While on the Scholarship Committee it was so impactful to see how these scholarships gave hope to students. This wouldn't have been possible without the diverse team of Admission Counselor advocates- each bringing their voice to the discussions. Illinois College Fair Committee is teaching me that with collaboration and partnership we can reach further and bring more value to this life changing work. We've tried new events, helped coordinate current fairs to help streamline while negating overlap, all to maximize the potential of these student opportunities. This couldn't have been done effectively without a diverse team of dedicated professionals. Being part of this group means building each other up, having discussions that lead to growth, listening, and being open to new ideas. I will continue to encourage everyone to share their insights, join a committee, and become involved with IACAC. Also, I'll remain dedicated to being someone who listens, invites conversation, and new ideas while adding value where I can and amplifying the value our membership brings. We're better together and without a doubt there is room for all. I plan to do my best to encourage and show colleagues how to get involved, support the work being done, and serve to the best of my ability if given the opportunity in this new role. Thank you for this opportunity and for all the wonderful advocacy work you do everyday!

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

I didn't want to grow up to be an admission counselor, I didn't even know this was a profession. Like some of my friends and colleagues I stumbled into this work by using my work study hours in the admissions office. As far as student jobs go, being a tour guide sounded exciting and fun. Honestly it was a ton of fun! My favorite part was seeing the visitors eyes light up while showing and telling them all about the campus. Then running into them the following year, becoming friends, and watching them flourish. Hearing that I helped them feel comfortable and confident in the decision to attend and then seeing them so happy and thriving made the job so rewarding. When it was my turn to start the job search I had no idea where to begin, when I heard the admissions office was hiring it seemed like a natural fit- I went for it...didn't get it. I was turned down and felt pretty disappointed, but figured there was another path for me. Shortly after that another opening had become available and I got the call to come back. That initial disappointment melted away and I eagerly accepted the job. Being able to continue and broaden the work I'd done as a student felt like a dream job at the time. Plus, I'd done it! Found a real job using my college degree- being the first to graduate from college out of all of my cousins and the first to have a traditional college experience left me with some uncertainty about how this whole process would go for me. But hey, look at that, it all worked out! Starting out at small private liberal arts schools gave me the opportunity to wear many hats and grow quickly personally and professionally. My biggest personal take-away from these positions is that you can learn anything new if you're willing and challenges can be fun. Professionally, I learned that each student and family are unique, meeting them where they are is a must to serve them equitably. After 5 years in the small private liberal arts college world, I was encouraged to consider applying for the role I now have for a medium sized public university where most of the students are studying for a bachelor of science degree and I couldn't be more grateful to Christine Grotzke for that. Her encouragement was what I needed to pursue a new position and take on these new challenges as a regional representative. This example led me on a path of wanting to do the same for others in this field and that's what I hope to continue to do if selected for the board. I've found it's essential to keep connecting with our students and with each other. If we continue to collaborate, partner, and bring others to the table I can't wait to see what comes next. Thank you!

Education

B.A. Speech Communication

Augustana College

IACAC Involvements

Illinois Association of College Admission Counselors (IACAC) 2007-Present

IACAC Leadership positions

- Co-Chair for Scholarship Committee 2016-2018
- Co-Chair for Raffle Committee 2015
- Co-Chair for Illinois College Fair Committee 2021-present

IACAC Volunteer positions

- Scholarship Committee
- Mentorship Committee
- Credentials Committee
- Illinois College Fair Committee
- Program Conference Committee
- Evaluations Conference Committees.
- Served as Moderator for IACAC Virtual Conference 2020

IACAC Presentations

- Conference Session at IACAC 2018 'The 4th Industrial Revolution'
- Conference Session at IACAC 2023 'Generation Zoom'

IACAC Nominations

- Nominated for Council Team Director on IACAC Executive Board 2018

Other Involvements

Chicago Area Regional Representatives (CARR) 2009-Present

International Association of College Admission Counselors (IACAC) 2021-2022

IACAC Presentation

- Conference Session at IACAC 2022 Conference 'Generation Zoom'

National Association of College Admission Counselors 2019

- Attended the National Conference in Louisville, Kentucky
- National Association of Regional Admission Counselors
- Attended and participated in a panel session the National Association of Regional Admission Counselors Conference in 2019



Alejandro Campos

Board Director

IACAC Member: 6 Years

University of St. Francis

Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions

he/him

Education

B.A. in Political Science

University of St. Francis

MBA in Data Analytics

University of St. Francis

IACAC Involvements

- Co-Chair Sharing the Dream (5 years)
- Co-Chair Government Relations (3 years)
- Co-Chair Exhibitors, Sponsors & Advertisers (3 years)
- James A. Alexander Newcomer Award (2022)

Other Involvements

- President of the Hispanic Latino Coalition of Will & Grundy County (3 years)
- NACAC Rising Star Award (2023)

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

My vision to add more voices to the table is by interacting with our membership to find out whose voice is missing or who's voice needs to be enhanced. We need not just our membership reflected at the table, but also our students reflected at the table to make room for all people. I know once voice would be added to the table and that is of our veteran students.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

Like most I did not go to school to be an admissions counselor. I "wanted" to be an immigration and veterans rights attorney. However, when I entered this profession, I found that I could help these communities that I have been apart of for most of my life. The intersectionality of my two identities being a second generation Latino and a former member of the military has shaped the way I work with students and others in this profession.

Margaret Jones (MJ)

Board Director

IACAC Member: 7 Years

Drake University

Assistant Director of Regional Admissions

she/her

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

I was always taught that you make room and bring others along with you as you grow and climb the ladder. I

learned the importance of diversity in thought and voices as I navigated through various difficult situations both personally and professionally. Education is a field where we need a variety of voices as we are potential decision makers. The more context and clarity we can have, the better our field will be for future counselors and, most importantly, the students we serve. I'd love to see new folks get involved more and more within IACAC.

The first part of my vision is an invitation followed by mentorship and sharing stories about the importance of what we do. My committee service started in the same way.

As a woman of color, it has been easy to struggle with imposter syndrome – especially in spaces where I don't see myself represented. Encouraging people from diverse backgrounds (in race, upbringing, experiences, expertise, etc.) to join us in the work that we do locally and nationally can display the importance of diverse perspectives and, hopefully, we will see new, passionate professionals get involved.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

As a Black, first-generation college student, I longed to see myself represented in spaces that I entered. I quickly learned that it would not happen as often as I wanted it to. My parents instilled the importance of education to me at an early age. So, when I realized that admissions was a career path, I jumped in head first to give it my all. I am a lifelong learner, always seeking out ways to be my best self professionally and personally. As I move through my career, I want to inspire others to do the same. I constantly seek out opportunities for mentorship – serving students and other young professionals. I am passionate about bringing new voices along with me on my journey. I love seeing students find their fit and discover their passions. The same is true for witnessing admissions counselors find their footing in this field.



Education

B.A. Communications

IACAC Involvements

- IAS committee (2017-21, 23-present)
- Scholarship committee (2017-present)
- Conference Entertainment Committee (2017-2021 – co-chair 2019-21)
- Mentorship committee (2017-present – co-chair 2019-2021, 2022-present)
- CAP committee (2017-2021)
- Conference Committees (2017-21, 23-present)
- Summer Institute Attendee (2017)
- Middle Management Attendee (2020)
- District Seminar presenter (2018)
- BAD SIG member (2022-present)
- Women in Admissions SIG member (2022-present)

Other Involvements

- Chicago Scholars mentor
- Chicago Scholars access counselor
- Chicago Education Advisory Cooperative Board Member



Bettie Mattison

they/
them

Board Director

IACAC Member: 4.5 Years

Marquette University

Regional Admissions Counselor

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

Honestly there's always room to be more inclusive and add more voices to our profession. I believe that it is everyone's duty to create environments where diverse perspectives are welcomed; whether you are being intentional on who you invite to speak in front of specific audiences, or you actively encourage people to challenge themselves to take on leadership roles. My fellow co-chairs and I work extremely hard to create an inclusive program for NCI. Everything we do is well thought out and we do our best to make sure that people feel seen. My specific vision involves making sure that those who come after me are empowered and feel like their perspectives matter. In addition to that, my goal with other committees is to always contribute in ways that are inclusive to identities who may not have a seat at the table. To me, the work of adding more voices to our profession involves encouraging those who want to be here, to stay here. We need diversity in all levels of our association and within the institutions we work for, because otherwise we are doing a disservice to future generations of college students and admissions professionals.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

I am a proud first-generation college graduate. Being someone who did not know how to navigate the college landscape, that perspective informs everything that I do professionally. I've studied several social justice topics from education, to sociology, law, gender and sexuality, and more. The knowledge I've acquired, showed me who is often the most marginalized within higher education institutions. Because of these experiences, I entered the admissions field to work from the lens of advocacy. And I continue in this field to focus on issues of access and belonging for students. Building community in spaces that were not created for people who share my identities, is an act of persistence in and of itself. That will always be a passion for me.

Education

B.A. Criminology & Law Studies
Marquette University

M.S.Ed Higher Education &
Student Affairs

Northern Illinois University

IACAC Involvements

- New Counselor Institute Co-Chair (2022-Present)
- Equity and Access Ad Hoc Committee Member (2022-Present)
- Inclusion, Access, and Success Committee Member (2022-Present)
- Recipient of the James A. Alexander Newcomer Award (2023)
- Mentorship Member (Mentor)- 2023
- IACAC Conference Presenter (2022 and 2024)
- Sharing the Dream Conference Attendee (2021-Present)
- SIG involvement: BADSIG and LGBTQ+ SIG

Other Involvements

- Chicago Area Regional Representatives (CARR) Member



Cari Franz

she/her

Board Director

IACAC Member: 10 Or So Years On and Off
Ridgewood Community High School
Counselor

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

As a high school counselor, it's imperative that all students feel safe and welcome when coming into my office. I ensure that my office is a zero judgment space; I believe that difficult conversations around the transition to college can be more productive when students feel confident and secure. To this point, including these high school and college students in our discussions is of the utmost importance as they are the ones who endure the full experience of college admissions. At Ridgewood, we are mostly entirely first-generation; we had over 40 students from Ukraine enroll just in 2023. So, part of our goal is to include these families both in our conversations, but also ensure that they understand the application process. We are accomplishing this through Parent Universities, translating presentations in Ukrainian, Spanish, and Arabic and making these available to churches and mosques to which our families belong. We also developed a first-generation student group that helps us understand what they need to know and how to best present the information. Asking questions and showing various stakeholders that we want to help them in the way that best suits their needs demonstrates our commitment to making them feel heard. I think the same strategy can work on a bigger level for the entire profession.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

My professional story starts with graduate school at Indiana University. I did my internship at Evanston High School, and upon graduation, I worked in financial aid at Columbia College. From there, I worked for one year at Woodlawn Middle School and then came to Ridgewood in 2002. At Ridgewood, I have always been the AP Coordinator, and my involvement with College Board led to my joining the AP Coordinator Experience Team about 7 years ago; this is a team that provides professional development workshops (I present these) to AP Coordinators around the world. It has been extremely rewarding both in that at Ridgewood we have an open enrollment AP program, so any student can take any AP course, and in that I'm providing assistance to AP programs where they are also offering these challenging courses to students who otherwise may not have access. I have also been employed by DePaul as an adjunct professor teaching the counseling internship course. During quarantine, I noticed that students didn't have as much access to their counselors, and this is what prompted me to start Major Help: College Counseling. This is currently a side business where I help 10 students outside of Ridgewood every year. My passion is to help students visualize a life path that they may not have felt was available to them.

Education

B.A.
Ohio University
M. S. Ed
Indiana University

IACAC Involvements

- National College Fair Committee
- High School Counselor Professional Development Committee
- Various Workshops

Other Involvements

- College Board Consultant
- Major Help: College Counseling (own college counseling business)
- AP Coordinator



Kristina Luster



Board Director

IACAC Member: 6 Years

Mount Carmel High School

Dean of Student Services & Director of College Counseling

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

The conference theme of "There's Room for All" really hits home for me as a first generation college student and teen parent. Being a teen parent from a low income background with a lack of knowledge and support at home made me continually question whether my voice was worthy of being heard. Throughout my career in college admission and school counseling I have been blessed by mentors that included and encouraged me to have a voice. From my time interning with Aliza Gilbert to working under Stephanie Leveson I have had doors opened for me that I didn't know existed. My passion and the reason I do the work I do is to empower others in the same way that I have been empowered.

The more voices and diversity of identity and experiences that are elevated in our profession the better we will become as a whole. I am proud to be a female leader within the profession and I push myself daily to empower others to lead the way in our field. My personal journey put me on the road to make my life work, opening doors for my students, staff members, and the professionals I mentor. I will continue to mentor and elevate the voices of others with a commitment to equity and inclusion on the IACAC Executive Board if given the opportunity.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

As a first generation college student and teen parent from a low income household, to say I was lost when it came to college planning is an understatement. I was blessed to have a school counselor (Shoutout to Mrs. Hill) that truly cared and invested her time and energy into helping me navigate the college admission process. Once in college I quickly found my passion in the political science department. I wanted to understand how to navigate political systems in order to make the world a better place. Once I graduated I realized that I wanted to work in a field that allows me to help students navigate the complex system of accessing higher education. I wanted to have the ability to change the trajectory of students' lives by providing them access to higher education. Higher education is absolutely essential to breaking the bonds of generational poverty. Everyday that I go to work and serve students I know that I am truly changing lives. On the hard days I am able to regroup myself in the work and know that what I do matters. I truly feel privileged to work in a field where my passion for politics stays alive while being able to directly serve students.

Education

B.A. Political Science

Creighton University

M.Ed in Higher Education

Loyola University Chicago

IACAC Involvements

I currently cochair the IACAC Government Relations Committee. It is my third year in this leadership role. During my time as GRC cochair the committee has been a leader both locally and nationally. Last year we held our largest Advocacy Day to date in Springfield. I have worked diligently to get the School Counselor Gift Ban amended in the Illinois State Legislature and have made significant progress towards that goal. Our committee also lead the charge to plan and execute National Advocacy Day in Washington DC. Last year we partnered with 6 other affiliates in order to best advocate for our students in Congress. I am very proud of the work we have done over the last 3 year.

I am currently a member of the mentorship committee and received the match of the year award last conference. I truly enjoy my role as a mentor in the association and plan to continue to serve in this capacity annually.

Lastly, I am always available to help the association in away way I can. From working the front desk at conference to assisting with HBCU contacts for our new college fair I am happy to help. IACAC has been instrumental in my success as a professional and I want to give back to the profession/association that has given so much to me.

Other Involvements

Member of the Georgia Need Based Financial Aid Initiative

NACAC Government Relations Advisory Board Member

NACAC Next Participant (Selected for the next term)



Kate Moody

Board Director

IACAC Member: 12+ Years

Barrington High School

Post-Secondary Counselor

she/her

Education

B.S. Business Administration

Loyola University- Chicago

M.S. Community & School Counseling

National Louis University

IACAC Involvements

- Admission Practices Committee- 2 years
- Conference Attendee for 12 years
- Member of the Teller Conference Committee- 2 years
- Conference Presenter
- IRCF Host for 12 years
- Attended several District Seminars
- Attended a Micro Bus tour
- Attended several Bus 'O Fun and Plane 'O Fun trips

Other Involvements

- Directions Fair Committee Member (a post-secondary options event for students with diagnosed disabilities and their families)
- Adjunct Professor -National Louis University (Taught an Ethics in Counseling course.)
- NACAC Member for 12+ Years
- ACA & ISCA Member for several years
- Attended 11 NACAC Conferences
- Moderated at NACAC Conference

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

My vision to make room for all revolves around three key strategies: diversification, accessibility, and empowerment. The goal is to create a profession that not only welcomes but also actively seeks and nurtures diversity in all its forms—be it gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, or thought.

Diversity can be fostered through genuinely inclusive recruitment practices as well as exposing individuals from underrepresented backgrounds to our profession by making internships and funding available to them. Education and Training as well as more flexible working environments will help to make our profession more accessible to all. We can strive to empower people from all different backgrounds through mentorship programs and leadership opportunities. Although there is always room for growth, IACAC has always been a role model for many other affiliates across the country and already has a number of these programs put into place. We just need to stay aware of and true to the vision of nurturing all individuals from all backgrounds through these types of initiatives. We can do this by educating the people in our own institutions about how to be genuinely inclusive. Diversity is strength. By making our profession more inclusive, we're not just doing the right thing; we're also enhancing our collective capability and resilience.

Continuing to create a profession that truly reflects the diversity of the society we serve, will improve our understanding and empathy, leading to better outcomes for everyone.

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

My first career right out of college was in the world of Human Resources: Recruiting, Compensation and Employee Relations. I stopped for a while to raise my three children holding various part time jobs to make ends meet. I came to the counseling profession later in life discovering my passion for working with teenagers through my job as a College and Career Assistant. There I loved developing relationships with students who were exploring their options and setting off on their next journey after high school. That's when I decided to get my School Counseling degree. I've been lucky enough to be a Post-Secondary Counselor for almost 12 years. Regardless of the career area I'm in, I always strive to be both a mentor and a mentee, freely sharing my knowledge and experiences as well as learning from colleagues and students alike. A core value of mine is to make all the people I encounter in my professional life (personal too) feel heard, valued and respected.



Lauren Yates

Board Director

IACAC Member: 6 Years

Ottawa Township High School

School Counselor

she/her

Education

B.A. Music Education

Bradley University

M.S. Ed School Counseling

Quincy University

IACAC Involvements

- National College Fair/Illinois National College Fair Chair (2023-current)
- Scholarship Committee Member(2019, 2023-Present), Chair (2020-2023)
- High School Professional Development Committee Member (2019-Present)
- Mentorship Mentee (2019)
- Mentorship Mentor (2023)
- Transfer Summit Attendee & Presenter (2020 & 2024)
- District Conference Attendee (2021)
- Webinar Moderator (2020)
- Annual Conference Attendee (2019, 2021, 2023, 2024), Presenter (2021 & 2024)

Other Involvements

- Give Back (Alumni and Mentor)
- IVCC Transfer Night Moderator (2019-2022)
- College Changes Everything Conference Presenter (2020)

In keeping with this year's Conference theme "There's Room for All," what's your vision to be inclusive and add more voices to our profession and why?

When I think of a professional community that truly has a landing spot for everyone involved it is IACAC. There are so many opportunities to grow as a professional and grow as a leader in the organization for our members. As an organization, we need to be vigilant in ensuring that we encourage our members to take on these opportunities. We can only grow if we acknowledge our unique talents across our membership, channel it, and find ways to keep it growing to strengthen our membership and leadership. Each of us in the organization has a voice that needs to be heard in the decision making of IACAC, but how can we make that happen? It's reaching out to someone new and connecting them to joining a committee, it's recognizing that is going to take tough conversations and work to move forward, it's in developing relationships and engaging the whole membership across the state, and it's in learning from one another to keep growing new ideas. We have to allow ourselves to be vulnerable and put ourselves out there- take the leap, and find your seat at the IACAC table. I never would have thought six years ago I would be where I am within IACAC. Thanks to Tony Minestra and Megan O'Rourke for opening the door and giving a nudge to being a scholarship committee chair. I have been able to grow professionally and within the organization, now being a chair for the National College Fair and our inaugural Illinois National College Fair. It just takes the nudge and willingness to pull up a seat. That nudge is what I want to be for others in the organization and to encourage peers to be for those around them. I want to grow the voices at the table by continuing to engage and strengthen our membership across the state, especially in districts where sometimes voices aren't as strong. I want IACAC to continue to be a welcoming organization where we can learn from one another and strengthen work across committees. Let's encourage one another to keep opening up chairs and welcoming everyone to our table!

Share your professional story, what is essential to you?

I believe that everyone creates their own story and that your past informs your future. I am a first-gen college graduate. I went into college not understanding just how fortunate I was to get the scholarships I was awarded to make going to undergrad at Bradley affordable for my parents. I am fortunate to be a Give Back Scholar and that in being one the idea of giving back to my community and to others is important. My professional journey started with me intending to be a high school band director until I retired, but I learned that I enjoyed working with students through their problems and planning for their future more which sparked me to pursue becoming a school counselor. I was a Walmart Assistant Manager as I completed my Master's, and learned a lot about leading others and working as a team. When I started my current role as a school counselor, I joined IACAC to connect with others in the profession to educate and connect myself to best serve my students. These experiences in my life are just some of what help guide my professional outlook and how I work with my students. Just as I have my story, every student has their own story and their own path- it is my goal to help guide them to the resources to help them plan their future and be as knowledgeable as I can to be a resource myself for them. One of my passions is for students and families to know more about the transfer process while in high school. In my community, there is a high percentage of students that pursue community college, and the connection between the community college and high school is something I value. Thanks to IACAC, I have been able to connect to resources to strengthen that connection and grow it for the betterment of my students.