

DO YOU NEED AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT?



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Finding the right school, college or program can be a rewarding process, but for some families the experience is challenging, overwhelming and at times frustrating. Few decisions have as great an impact on a student. Families may find themselves at a loss to properly evaluate their options and make appropriate choices. Seeking the services of an independent educational consultant can be the wisest investment a family can make. And, the fees involved may be less than 3% of a four-year college tuition bill.

Hiring an independent educational consultant can give families objective advice, access to reliable information, and the kind of individual attention necessary to make an informed decision. To locate an independent educational consultant in your area, you can search the Independent Educational Consultants Association's website: www.IECAonline.com. IECA members are required to have a master's degree, at least three years' admissions counseling experience, and have worked with scores of students before their applications are considered for membership.

The reasons families hire independent educational consultants vary. Families considering a secondary school typically lack knowledge or familiarity with what the options are. In addition to traditional day schools, there are boarding schools, Learning Disability programs, and public charter schools. While a tremendous amount of information is available on the Internet, an independent educational consultant can provide qualitative analysis for the selection. Consultants have not only visited these schools, but undoubtedly have placed many students there. Consultants are also knowledgeable about the admission process and can advise families every step of the way. IECA member consultants are required to have extensive campus visits—they have visited, on average, over 150 campuses each.

For families considering college, the main reason to hire an independent educational consultant is individualized attention. Most public school guidance counselors would like to assist students individually with the college process but they have too many students to offer much in the way of individual attention. And, they often have many more responsibilities than college counseling: They are responsible for scheduling as well as other social and emotional

issues that face teenagers today. Independent consultants can take much of the stress out of the process and be an objective, third-party, helping a family through the process of transitioning from high school and living at home to going off to college and living away from home. IECA member consultants are knowledgeable about local schools as well as national schools.

IECA members understand the importance of their role in the college application process. Members reassure students and parents that there are great college choices for everyone, and help reduce anxiety for both parents and students. Our members believe that the student, not the parent or the consultant, is responsible for driving the application process. Success is judged not by gaining admission, but by a successful experience wherever a student chooses to matriculate. IECA members' pro bono work and the IECA Foundation seek to get this information into the hands of all families.

Because IECA consultants are committed to the highest ethical standards of practice, families will find that IECA consultants have the student's best interest as their sole focus. IECA members sign an annual pledge that governs their interactions with colleges, students, and parents. They agree to avoid any action that distorts or misrepresents a student's record or interfere with a university's ability to accurately evaluate a student. Because experience, expertise, and personal style vary, families should engage prospective consultants in a discussion about their background, experience, style as well as how the meetings will be conducted, and what the fee structure is before the first meeting.

Employing the services of an educational consultant may be the best investment families can make. Tapping into the knowledge and expertise of a consultant who has extensive experience to guide families in making this important decision can make the difference between a really good match and a less than successful experience.

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