



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 6, 2009

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Private College Counseling Profession Grows Despite Economy

With the country in a recession, pervasive economic uncertainty, and unemployment on the rise, it might be surprising to hear that families are turning to educational consultants more than ever to help with school and college placements. As the economy weakens, hiring a qualified educational advisor for your school or college search makes more sense than ever, for both academic and financial reasons, according to the Independent Educational Consultants Association.

“With schools and colleges becoming more expensive and competitive, and student anxiety levels off the charts, families feel increased pressure to make a lasting, successful choice for their student,” says IECA Executive Director Mark Sklarow. “An independent educational consultant serves as a student’s personal resource during this important decision-making process, which explains the growth in consulting during these tough economic times.”

Families want to find a good match for their child, where he or she succeeds, thrives, and graduates. Educational consultants can improve the odds of success, and ultimately

save the family money. Because consultants are familiar with a multitude of schools, they can present students with a much wider selection of possibilities, and provide vital help in weighing factors such as cost, location, social environment, academics, and financial aid. It benefits the family to find the right fit for their child, avoiding having to transfer schools, which is an expensive process, particularly since credits often don't transfer, costing tuition fees and lost time.

A consultant also helps families refine and pare down a list so families are not traveling to look at inappropriate schools or colleges, and filing more applications than necessary. Independent educational consultants spend 20 percent of their time on the road, meeting with admission officers, touring campuses, and exploring the campus environment. Consultants learn extensive, first-hand knowledge of colleges around the country, and continually keep up-to-date on changes and admission trends. This personal insight provides families with a much fuller understanding of a school or college than is conveyed in a brochure or Web site, which are often created by a marketing firm, and can save them a great deal of time and effort.

When a family decides to hire an educational consultant, they will want to be sure to get one that is highly qualified. IECA membership is that guarantee. IECA members have met the highest standards in the profession. IECA's required qualifications include a master's degree, at least three years of admissions counseling experience, extensive campus visits, and experience working with scores of students before their application with IECA will be considered.

The IECA was founded in 1976 as a nonprofit, professional association of established educational consultants. IECA member educational consultants are professionals who

assist students and families with educational decision-making. Their educational backgrounds, specialized training, campus visitations, and professional experience equip them to help students choose schools, colleges, or programs that meet their individual needs and goals. Membership in the association requires consultants to meet IECA's professional standards and subscribe to its Principles of Good Practice. Members continually update their knowledge and maintain skills through IECA-sponsored meetings, workshops, training programs, and information exchanges with colleges, schools, programs and other consultants.

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