



National Association for
College Admission Counseling

*NACAC's Statement of Principles
of Good Practice (the "SPGP")*
2017

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NACAC's Statement of Principles of Good Practice ("SPGP")

NACAC's *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* promotes principled conduct among colleges and universities and among school counselors, independent educational consultants, and college admission officers in recruiting of students and in guiding their transition to postsecondary undergraduate education.

A nice way to put it is to say that it is:
"A Philosophy of Doing the Right Thing."

NACAC's *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* ("SPGP")
is organized into five sections:

1. Core Values and Member Conventions
2. Mandatory Practices (*i.e.*, the practices that all of us must follow)
3. Interpretations of the Mandatory Practices
4. Best Practices (*i.e.*, not required, but *strongly* encouraged)
5. Education, Monitoring Procedures and Penalties (a separate document on the NACAC website)

You'll find these documents online at:

www.nacacnet.org/spgp

Why is the SPGP important?

- It protects NACAC's postsecondary members from unfair competition. It says that it's OK for colleges to compete for students, but they must compete fairly and ethically.
- It sets ethical standards for secondary school members that speak to the information they disclose about students, the data they include on school profiles and transcripts, and respect for student confidentiality and privacy.
- **Above all: the SPGP declares that protecting the best interests and rights of students is a central concern of our profession.**

But wait...

What about this *new* SPGP all the cool kids on the playground have been talking about?



The New SPGP

Winter 2016, NACAC's Board of Directors created an 18-member Steering Committee on Admission Practices chaired by Todd Rinehart of the University of Denver (former chair of the National AP Committee).

NACAC's Charge to the Steering Committee

- Engage wide cross-section of NACAC members and other professionals in discussions about the SPGP
- Adapt the SPGP to set ethical standards for a changing educational landscape in college admission
- Condense, simplify, and modernize its language
- Issue a final report with recommendations to the Board of Directors, NACAC Assembly delegates, and membership at large by September 2017

Steering Committee Objectives

Create a document that will:

1. Protect students from unethical recruitment practices
2. Protect institutions from unfair competition
3. Provide clear ethical principles and clear rules for implementing them
4. Offer rationales for these principles and rules
5. Enjoy support from both sides of the desk
6. Stand as the conscience of our profession



Highlights of the New SPGP

1. Everything in the new SPGP is intended to be **mandatory**
2. **General principles are immediately followed by a section describing implementation** (i.e., no more flipping back and forth between principles and interpretations)
3. **Truthfulness and transparency** are ethical imperatives. These apply to both sides of the desk. (e.g., what colleges must disclose to students and parents; what schools must disclose on transcripts or profiles)
4. SPGP covers **individual professional conduct**.
5. Respect for **student privacy and confidentiality** is an ethical imperative.
6. More clarity regarding **application plans** (e.g., Early Decision, Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action, etc.)
7. Greater clarity on admission cycle **dates and deadlines**... May 1 still means May 1.
8. Sections on **Wait Lists, Transfer admission, deferred/midyear admission**, and the use of **commissioned agents** in international student recruitment.
9. Handy **glossary** so there is no confusion about terms.



What's the role of National and Affiliate Admission Practices Committees?

They educate admission and counseling professionals and their institutions regarding ethical college admission standards adopted and promoted by NACAC.

They assist institutions in fully integrating these policies and procedures into their practices.

Each year, they review, formulate and recommend changes to NACAC's *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* and its *Education, Monitoring Procedures and Penalties* document.

They monitor compliance with the SPGP.

They promote ethical college admission standards by non-members within our profession and awareness of these standards by the general public.

Some of the most important Mandatory Practices

- **Abide by the May 1 Candidates' Reply Date**
- Do not ask students on applications or other forms to disclose the names or rank order of their other college choices
- Establish no freshman application deadlines that fall prior to October 15, and do not offer students incentives to apply before October 15
- Do not offer special incentives to apply Early Decision
- Abide by agreed upon conventions for reporting admissions data
- Do not offer or accept compensation to place or recruit a student (*international commissioned agents are allowable under special circumstances*)
- Do not make disparaging comments about other institutions or colleagues
- Do not recruit students after they have told you that they are enrolling elsewhere.

How to Report an Allegation

If anyone – counselor, student, parent, admission officer – has a concern that the SPGP has been violated, it is important that the individual file a complaint.

Use NACAC's online *Confidential Complaint Form* at www.nacacnet.org/spgp). Although using NACAC's form is recommended, you may also report your allegation directly to your Affiliate's Admissions Practices Committee.

Provide the name of the institution where alleged violation occurred.

Describe the nature of the violation.

Include supporting documentation for your claim.

NACAC will then forward the complaint to the AP Committee Chair of the Affiliate where the subject of the complaint is located.

Remember that names and contact information always remain confidential!

What Happens Next?

- Most cases are resolved amicably with a simple phone call between an Admission Practices Committee Chair and a senior admissions officer at the institution that is the subject of the complaint.
- Cases that cannot be resolved at the Affiliate level are referred to the National AP Committee for consideration.
- If they cannot be resolved by the National Committee, then penalties may include a recommendation to the NACAC Board of Directors for:
 - Issuing a Statement of Noncompliance
 - Excluding the institution from NACAC–sponsored events
 - Suspending membership and membership privileges
 - Terminating NACAC membership and notifying all NACAC members that the institution’s membership has been terminated
- The complainant is notified of the resolution

Trends NACAC has observed in recent years:

Making disparaging comments about colleges, especially on social media.

“Poaching” – i.e., recruiting students who are already enrolled elsewhere to transfer

Manipulating students into applying before October 15 by offering incentives to apply earlier or implying that they will be disadvantaged if they apply later

Asking students on application supplements and other forms to identify their other college choices

Manipulating students into depositing before May 1 by implying that they will benefit if they do (“although you have until May 1, it is to your advantage to deposit within 30 days”)

Other May 1 *National Candidates’ Reply Date* violations (citing earlier deadlines, including early deadlines for scholarships or special programs)

Some U.S. colleges recruit international students by contracting with commissioned agents who are paid based on the number of students who enroll. Are these students aware of this financial arrangement when an agent recommends a U.S. college to them?

Some case studies

Let the wild rumpus begin!

Case Study 1: Application Deadline

“Your senior year will be busy, so start early on your application to Eager Beaver State College! Submit an application by July 31, and we’ll waive your \$50 application fee.”

Is this a violation?

Answer (Case Study 1): Yes!

SPGP Mandatory Practice II.B.12. All post secondary members agree they will:

“not establish any application deadlines for first-year candidates for fall admission **prior to October 15** and will give equal consideration to all applications received by that date.”

And the Interpretation for II.B.12 adds:

“a. Colleges and universities may welcome the initiation of applications from first-year students prior to the notification date and earliest application deadlines. Any incentives offered, including but not limited to **application fee waivers**, essay waivers, scholarships, housing, etc., must be honored at least through October 15;”

Case Study 2: Comparing College Costs

Along the interstate as you enter a state near you is a giant billboard that reads,

Lowest Cost in our Region!! Compare these costs:

Ural University	\$35,000 per year
Tian Shan College	\$33,750 per year
Himalaya State University	\$24,700 per year
Kush University	\$18,500 per year

Why pay more? Enroll at Kush today!

Is this a violation?

Case Study 2: Comparing College Costs

Yes!

Mandatory Practice I.A.2 and Mandatory Interpretation I.A.2.a:

Members agree they will not use disparaging comparisons of secondary or postsecondary institutions.

- a. Members will refrain from publicly disseminating biased, unflattering and/or potentially inaccurate information about secondary or postsecondary institutions, their admission criteria and/or their curricular offerings.

 Mentioning other institutions by name when comparing costs is misleading because it is **never** an “apples-to-apples” comparison. Institutions differ in the number of credit hours that tuition includes, in the mandatory fees they assess, and in how much of demonstrated need they meet and for which students. They also differ in their discount rates, whether tuition is based on the student’s major or class level, how they assess housing rates, and whether financial aid grants are renewable from one year to the next.

Case Study 3: Deposit Due Date

On February 1st a student receives an offer of admission that includes this paragraph:

“It is my pleasure to congratulate you on your admission to Awesome State University. To accept this offer of admission and begin the enrollment process, please respond to this offer within 30 days.”

Is this a violation?

Answer (Case Study 3): You bet it is!

SPGP Mandatory Practice II.B.3. – All post secondary members agree they will:

“permit first–year candidates for fall admission to choose among offers of admission and institutionally–affiliated financial aid and scholarships **until May 1**, and state this deadline explicitly in their offers of admission, and not establish policies nor engage in practices whose effect is to manipulate commitments prior to May 1”

OK, that’s a pretty clear violation. But what about the following?

Case Study 4: Another Deposit Due Date Issue

From Spectacular University's offer of admission:

“Congratulations on your offer of admission to Spectacular University! I am pleased to confirm that you are being offered direct admission to both the undergraduate program as well as our School of Medicine. Your deadline to accept your direct admission is March 1.”

Does it make a difference that the offer of admission is for a joint BA/MD program with their School of Medicine?

Answer (Case Study 4): No it does not make a difference that admission is to a joint BA/MD program. This is still a violation.

As the SPGP's Mandatory Interpretation for II.B.3.d notes:

“the May 1 deadline also applies to any academic major or special program to which the candidate has been offered admission. Examples of special programs can include, but are not limited to, honors programs, **dual-enrollment master's, or professional-degree programs;**”

Case Study 5: Scholarship Deadline Early Than May 1

When the University of Western Southeastern State (UWSS) offered admission to Amy, its letter said that students have until May 1st to accept their offer of admission by sending a deposit.

Amy then received a letter from the Office of Financial Aid offering a scholarship of \$10,000. However, it says that Amy must let UWSS know by March 15 if she will accept the scholarship so that they may offer the scholarship to another student if she declines it.

Is this a violation?

Answer (Case Study 5): Yes

SPGP Mandatory Practice II.B.3. – All postsecondary members agree they will: “permit first-year candidates for fall admission to choose among offers of admission **and institutionally-affiliated financial aid and scholarships until May 1**, and state this deadline explicitly in their offers of admission, and not establish policies nor engage in practices whose effect is to manipulate commitments prior to May 1”

And an Interpretation for II.B.3 adds:

II.B.3.c. “colleges will neither retract **nor adversely alter their offers of admission and/or financial aid prior to May 1** for candidates who choose not to reply until that date, nor will they state or imply that candidates might incur such a penalty by waiting until May 1 (including time zone) to submit an enrollment deposit”

But consider the following

Case Study 5 Discussion (Financial Aid wants to know by March 15 whether Amy accepts her \$10,000 scholarship)

Question: Her letter says that Amy must “accept” her award by March 15. Does it make a difference if:

- Amy still has until May 1 to send in her tuition deposit?
- Amy must deposit by March 15, but her deposit is refundable if she cancels by May 1?

Answer: Apart from binding Early Decision, May 1 is the only “deadline” colleges may cite for accepting admission or financial aid. Although a deposit may be refundable or not due until May 1, earlier deadlines still compel students to sign something that says, “yes, I’m enrolling,” even when they have not yet made that decision. NACAC believes that “May 1 means May 1” and that it is unethical to put students in the untenable position of either giving up their May 1 rights or signing something that may not be true.

Case Study 6: What constitutes a “complete” high school transcript?

Having received a “D” in his freshman year Math 9 at Mars High School, an aspiring athlete retakes the course during the summer and earns a B. At the start of his senior year, his mother worries that college coaches might be put off by the “D” and will not be interested in recruiting her son. She asks his school counselor for help: “can’t the school just list the B or perhaps average the two grades together to report a C?”

The counselor cheerfully explains, “don’t worry. We routinely delete the old grade and report only the higher grade.” The parent is pleasantly surprised to hear this as she had not seen the policy described on the school website or profile.

Must h.s. transcripts show every course a student attempts?

Answer (Case Study 6)

SPGP Mandatory Practice I.B.8. – All members agree that they will:

- “provide in a timely manner, **accurate**, legible, and **complete** transcripts for all students for admission or scholarships.”

The Interpretation for I.B.8 adds:

- I.B.8.A: “A complete transcript includes **all attempted courses**. However, **when school and/or district policy prohibits the inclusion of all coursework, the transcript or school profile must state the institutional policies** on recording repeated courses and indicate whether grades from all courses attempted are included in the cumulative GPA calculation.”

Note: There are two issues here:

1. Transcripts should list all courses attempted unless school policy dictates otherwise
2. And if its policy is otherwise, then the school’s profile needs to say that.

Case Study 7: Indicating Preferences

A student applies via Early Action to Mighty Midwestern University (MMU). In her letter of acceptance, MMU includes a survey that asks questions about her likes and dislikes. This includes a question about what other schools she has applied to and another asking her to rank order those schools.

Is this OK?

Answer (Case Study 7): No, it's not OK

SPGP Mandatory Practice II.B.2. All post secondary members agree they will:

- “not ask candidates, their schools, their counselors or others to list or rank order their college or university preferences on applications or other documents”

The Interpretations for Mandatory II.B.2 add:

- II.B.2.A: “postsecondary members can assess their candidates’ level of interest, but not by asking them to indicate a first choice or to rank order or name their other college choices;”
- II.B.2.B. “students are considered ‘candidates’ until they have officially confirmed their intention to enroll, usually by submitting an enrollment or tuition deposit, or have declined their offer of admission, or have had their offer of admission canceled.”

Note: In other words, students remain “candidates for admission” up until the time they have deposited, declined their offer, or have had their admission canceled, and so long as they are still candidates, colleges may not ask them to divulge their other college choices on forms or other documents.

- Questions?
- What are the issues and ethical lapses that especially concern you?



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Thank You!