



## 2023 Executive Board Election Candidate

### Vice President for Inclusion, Access & Success

**Name:** Rebecca Hansen

**Title:** Associate Director of International Admissions

**Institution:** Northern Kentucky University

**Location/Region:** United States/Canada & U.S.

**Member Group:** Post-Secondary (College & University)

### All Applicant Questions

**Please provide a statement of why you wish to run for the International ACAC Board, and other relevant information you would like members to know about you.**

I have a deep love for international education, so much so that I completely pivoted my career trajectory from “Opera Singer” to “International Student Advisor” during my senior year of college. (I have zero regrets). My job has allowed me the privilege of serving some of the most gifted, passionate, hard-working, and kind international students anyone could hope to meet, and it is a joy to work to provide opportunities for them every day. When I started my first job as an international admissions recruiter, I was told that becoming a member of International ACAC (then called OACAC) should be at the top of my to-do list; ten years later, this is the advice I give to any new international recruiters and admissions folk who I meet. Serving in this position would allow me to combine my love of diversity and inclusion advocacy with my desire to serve my professional community, allowing me to share my talents in a way that will benefit a truly worthy cause.

## Background and Experience

### Years of experience in post-secondary admissions counseling or related fields?

10+ years

### Please describe any **professional or volunteer experience** you feel would be relevant for serving on the International ACAC Executive Board.

I currently serve on the Membership committee for International ACAC, assisting VP Kate McKeen with the Onboarding Sub-Committee (2022-2025). I also served on the Hybrid Conference Planning Committee (2022). Beyond International ACAC, I am actively involved in advocacy on my campus, and am newly voted in as a member of NKU's 30-member Staff Congress where I have been an active advocate and outspoken staff member. (Staff Congress works in tandem with the Faculty Senate to represent our 2,000 staff and faculty). I was specifically asked to serve as an interim member of our university Staff Congress because of my dedication to diversity and equity on our campus as well as my public calls against the unethical behaviors we've unfortunately observed as of late. I have been able to mobilize and galvanize a community of supporters who are now collectively asking for change from our administration. Finally, I am in the process of creating a JEDI alliance on my campus for different groups supporting underrepresented and at-risk groups on our campus, so we can support each other and stand together as one.

### Please describe **how you have engaged in the international community**, and the impact this has had on your professional life. Describe any **International ACAC Committee experience** you have.

I have been a member of International ACAC since 2012 when I began working at Stetson University. Since then, I have had the pleasure of presenting twice at Int'l ACAC conferences: Shattering Ceilings & Taking Names: Breaking Through Gender Barriers in University Leadership (2017); and A Tale of Three Applications: Differing Approaches to Application Review (2018). I've also participated in national, regional, and state NAFSA, presenting twice and state-wide NAFSA events. During my time at NKU, I have worked alongside my talented colleagues to create our first ever strategic internationalization plan, overseeing one of three core pillars - Belonging. I've built relationships across campus so international students are always considered when new policies, majors, or other changes are being considered. I've aided in the creation of multiple articulation agreements and helped established global relationships that have driven our international enrollment from 325 to 506, from 50 countries to 65 countries represented. I founded our Global Ambassadors, an international peer mentorship and professional development opportunity. I am the staff advisor for the Indian Student Association, assisted in the creation of our new Norse of Nepal club, and helped plan and execute our first ever Diwali/Tihar celebration last fall. Finally, I proudly represent Brazil in our annual World Culture

Fest events, introducing students to guarana, brigadeiros, and the vibrant culture I share with my mother.

**Please describe your affiliation with NACAC, if any. How long have you been a member of NACAC? Do you have any volunteer or committee work or experience with NACAC?**

I have been a member of NACAC on and off, for three years at Stetson University (2012-2015) and recently with NKU (2022). Both institutions have traditionally been more involved with NACAC due to their strong domestic recruitment; in making the decision to focus my volunteering at Int'l ACAC, I believe I helped NKU raise its visibility internationally. This has been important to me both personally and professionally.

### **VP for Inclusion, Access, & Success Specific Questions**

**Please share any inclusion or access initiatives or events you have participated in or led as they relate to higher education (e.g.: financial aid workshops, community-based organization involvement, etc.) and any success you have had. Beyond the International ACAC Scholar Program, what are other ways International ACAC can support inclusion and access to our community?**

I spent the pandemic completing my master's degree in Integrative Studies, focusing on Global Education, Communication, and Public Administration. I focused on the international students at my institution, even conducting 36 hours of interviews for a qualitative study on the resilience of international students coming to the U.S. to seek an education. My capstone focused on the value of a narrative approach to advocacy, how the inclusion of personal stories helps bring cold numbers to life and creates a stronger bond between the audience and those being advocated for. Additionally, I am an active member of W.I.S.H. - Welcoming International Students Home. This is a non-profit organization founded by my colleague, Toni Schneller, that hosts activities with international students at Northern Kentucky University and the surrounding community. These activities include picking up new students from the airport, an international Thanksgiving dinner, and outings to Red's Baseball and FC Cincinnati games. W.I.S.H. is a crucial part of our campus initiatives to create stronger ties with the Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati community. Through W.I.S.H., international students have made lifelong friends with families in our community, creating a safe space off campus for them to exchange in cultural appreciation and celebration. I describe my ideas for International ACAC supporting inclusion and access in my answers to subsequent questions.

**Please describe any ideas you have for the future direction of this position, or specific initiatives you would like to develop. This may include this specific position, or may be in collaboration with another Vice President. Be as detailed as possible.**

I've been working with Kate McKeen on onboarding initiatives as part of the Membership Committee and I believe the VP of IAS could serve a crucial role here. In the DEI survey, 71.8% of members strongly agreed and 13.7% agreed that having a diverse membership is essential for International ACAC. There is a need and desire to improve the diversity of our active membership, which starts with recruitment and onboarding. Some of the ideas we've discussed in the membership committee that would achieve this include: having local Int'l ACAC members serve as representatives in their countries so they can both recruit and provide personalized attention to new members; creating a physical welcome package to send to new members, complete with tech stickers; and improving our onboarding emails and additional communication for new members. One way that we could specifically help members from underrepresented or historically marginalized groups to feel more welcomed is by connecting them early on with any affinity groups they might want to join, which would also mean centralizing a list of these groups to create easier access and better visibility for the Int'l ACAC community. Too often, these wonderful affinity groups are only accessed through word of mouth, and only if you end up meeting the right person. By amplifying them on the International ACAC website and inviting new members to participate in them early, we will be elevating their existence and facilitating stronger bonds with new members and our organization.

**Part of this position is managing people, committees, and projects. What is your experience in this area? Describe your management style. How do you like to be managed?**

I've been managing a team at NKU for the last 5 years, moving from 2 to 6 full-time staff direct reports in that time. My leadership style is very big-picture while my management style is very individualistic. I have bi-weekly meetings with each of my direct reports so I can check in with them and make sure they feel supported and heard. I also have bi-weekly meetings with the two cohorts (International Enrollment and Immigration) as well as a monthly meeting with the whole team. This ensures that any smaller issues get worked out in the appropriate settings while larger group meetings are truly for things that we all need to be aware of and discuss. I'm very much a "get it done" personality, so I have to be very intentional when working with my team to ensure I'm listening to everyone's opinions and concerns before pulling the trigger on an idea or a project. I manage this way because this is how I like to be managed - with openness, honesty, and care for my opinions and ideas, as well as frequent and transparent communication.

**Name your three most impactful takeaways from the December 2020 DEI Organization Assessment Report. How would you advance the conversation around diversity and inclusion within International ACAC? How do you believe the Executive Board should function in this capacity?**

After reviewing the DEI report, I found two areas that really stuck out to me: Member Engagement and Increasing Regional Representation. In my answer to the ways in which the VP

of IAS could work with other VPs for future initiatives, I touched on the need to improve our engagement with members early on, amplify affinity groups, and work with regional members to improve our representation in certain parts of the world. Providing tangible ways for current and incoming members to communicate with those in their geographic or identity-focused communities serves to both engage and increase diverse representation. Currently, when you go to the International ACAC membership resources page and click on “Engage with International ACAC,” the suggestion to “Connect and support members in your region” simply says “Anytime,” without a link or instructions on how to do so. Creating actual resources for facilitating this would go a long way to improving both areas I’ve highlighted.