



2023 Executive Board Election Candidate

President-Elect

Name: Wilson Lee

Title: Program Manager

Institution: Singapore American School

Location/Region: Singapore/Southeast Asia & Oceania

Member Group: Secondary (High School)

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.

International ACAC has a unique voice that needs to be heard and an identity that needs to be recognized. Our voice is an eclectic mix of global citizens who tirelessly advocate for our student's success. However, our voice isn't always heard. As President-Elect I will seek ways to amplify our voice and find ways to get others involved to support International ACAC's ambitious vision. During my time on the International ACAC Executive Board, I served on different committees and spearheaded various projects. I learned about our policies, our membership, but most importantly, the need for advocacy within our international community. We work in an industry that is subject to change and transient in nature. Additionally, our organization continues to face global challenges and exposes issues of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice. As a 2nd-generation American of Korean heritage, I am committed to antiracism and supporting DEIJ initiatives that make International ACAC more inclusive and ensure all voices are heard. As President-Elect, I am motivated to highlight the good work of our members while finding ways to support critical initiatives. This is achievable by

carrying out our Strategic Plan. Many important steps have already been taken, but to materialize our plan, it must be a collective effort. I believe I have a lot to contribute to this community. As a seasoned counselor, a faithful member of International ACAC, and an individual committed to service, I will leverage my organizational knowledge and volunteer experience to benefit our members across the globe.

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.

For the past four years, I have served on the International ACAC Executive Board as a NACAC delegate. This has been the most impactful experience of my professional career. Though my roles and responsibilities shifted due to the pandemic and changes within our organization, these shifts allowed me to understand and focus on the immediate needs of our organization. While on the Board, I was able to better understand International ACAC's governance and policies, our membership needs, and our mutually beneficial relationship with NACAC. By liaising with our organizational membership and attending every Board meeting, my involvement on the Board has helped provide insights into our organization's DNA while exploring areas of reform. My involvement with International ACAC has provided me with knowledge, friendship, and a global community. My volunteerism originally began on the Membership Committee vetting new member applications. Due to my passion for mentorship, I helped lay the foundation for regional networks. Years later, I was part of a group that launched the International ACAC Opportunity Grants. Today, I co-chair this committee that provides our membership with the financial means to support counselors as they support their students and communities. Most recently, I helped launch International ACAC's Mentor Year Program, which successfully paired 100 mentees with 100 mentors in its first two years. I am committed to continuing the good work International ACAC is doing while challenging us to meet the needs of our international community.

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.

This year marks my 22nd year working at a high school outside my home country. As a Korean-American, my global perspective is informed by growing up and attending university in

the United States, and working at culturally diverse schools in Seoul and Singapore where students consider universities around the world. I appreciate the daily conversations I have with our faculty, parents, and students. I have attended every NACAC conference since 2009. In 2012, I became a member of International ACAC (OACAC at the time) and have enjoyed every conference for the past 10 years. I also attended the International ACAC Regional Institute in South Korea and have presented at every summer conference since 2017 on topics ranging from letters of recommendation to grade distributions to the “Great Resignation.” I have written blogs and co-authored articles for our International ACAC website and was a panelist for the NACAC Journal on the impact of the U.S. political climate on international students. I currently sit on advisory boards for Cialfo and The College Board and provide those organizations with insightful information and experiences through an international lens. I am always eager and willing to provide support for others. Currently, I co-chair International ACAC’s Opportunity Grant Committee and our newest initiative, the Mentor Year Program, which was recognized by NACAC with the Rising Star Award. I believe the sustained commitment and spirit of volunteerism I have shown to International ACAC provides evidence of what you can expect from me as your President-Elect.

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 NACAC member since 2008 and attend the national conference annually. As I got involved, I initially volunteered and helped with conference registration. However, as I became more active within International ACAC, it became my mission to ensure that both NACAC and International ACAC understood the importance of each other. At first, I wrote a blog for our website expressing the value of membership between our two organizations. After I was highlighted in NACAC’s Member Spotlight as a “member who goes above and beyond to make a difference both professionally and personally,” I was asked to speak as a panelist for an article written in the NACAC Journal concerning how the U.S.’s political climate was impacting our international students. More recently, I participated in a webinar that highlighted the benefits of the national conference, changes to recent policies, and the impact NACAC has on International ACAC. My greatest experience has been as your NACAC delegate. I have been in this leadership role since 2018. Being a delegate has provided me with a greater sense and understanding of the purpose and structure of NACAC, and it is this understanding that inspires me to strengthen the bridges that exist between these two organizations.

President-Elect Specific Questions

Please describe your previous role(s) on the International ACAC Board and/or within International ACAC and how you see this as relevant for serving as President-Elect.

My time on the Executive Board has been an impactful experience that I cherish. My service on the Board and responsibilities as a delegate have allowed me to support a wide range of

programs and opportunities, and helped me to understand the inner workings of our organization. As President-Elect, I would be able to transition into this role with the knowledge and the confidence to support our diverse membership. Ever since I became a member of International ACAC, I have been fanatic about supporting our members. By no coincidence, my involvement began with the Membership Committee where my desire was to understand who our members were, while thinking of creative ways of growing our membership. Ten years later, that advocacy has only deepened. Co-chairing committees that support conference first-timers and disseminate Opportunity Grants has helped me understand the needs of our membership. One particular need that is consistently expressed and remains at the forefront of my mind is the greater need for community and mentorship. In response, we launched International ACAC's Mentor Year Program. Through 1-on-1 mentoring, we provided our membership with one of our greatest assets: access to community and direct support. In recognizing the positive impact of the program, International ACAC was awarded NACAC's Rising Star Award this past year. With my service on the International ACAC Board and a firm belief in this community's ability to continually evolve, I feel well-prepared to represent International ACAC as President-Elect.

Please share your philosophy on leadership and what makes an effective leader. Please provide examples from your previous experience.

"Where do you need me?" and "What snacks can I bring?" are examples of phrases that embody my approach to leadership. I get excited about new opportunities and supporting my colleagues. Opportunities and initiatives require time and resources, but most importantly, they demand support and empathy. My philosophy on leadership is to be humble and lead by example. So when a call for volunteers goes out or a task needs to be completed, I may be quick to raise my hand, but I also recognize the work that has gone before me so I can advance our initiatives. Previously in Korea, as Head of School Counseling, my leadership helped grow our counseling office to a program that was recognized for its core values of hard work, ethical values, and a student-centered approach. "Hard work" was demonstrated by being the first to arrive and the last to leave. "Ethical Values" were visible by administering every SAT and AP exam without compromise. And a "student-centered approach" was the reason I showed up every morning. From hosting late-night study halls during the application season, to coaching sports and sponsoring clubs, to DJing the Father/Daughter Dance, I led our administrative team by living these core values. Currently, in Singapore, I serve as the Program Manager of my school's college counseling office. The environment might not be the same, but my philosophy on leadership is no different. Respect is necessary to lead, but respect is also earned through humility and by leading the way.

Please share your vision for the future of International ACAC; speak to priorities, growth and change in our association.

At the start of the pandemic, International ACAC's theme was "Forward Together." We focused on building pathways for a more inclusive future. While we rallied together during those challenging times, we still have work to do towards greater inclusivity. When International ACAC had fewer members, some referred to our community as a family. As our industry grew, so did our membership. We are now one of the largest affiliates within NACAC, extending our reach throughout the world. However, with growth and diversity, we need to be intentional about preserving our identity while finding new ways to promote our sense of togetherness. As we focus on this year's conference, #FamilyStyle signifies a revival for our organization. This theme focuses on our membership and it is a shared and critical vision as we come together to form a community amidst global challenges and physical distancing. I have been actively involved in DEI training through CIS and the many conversations surrounding International ACAC's strategic plan. As we reflect on this plan and respond to the membership's expectations and the importance of optimizing our internal operations, enhancing the member experience globally continues to be a critical pillar and a top priority. I believe International ACAC's strategic plan is our definitive road map, but we are only in the early stages of this journey. I will make it my mission to see this plan to fruition by showing up for our members each day.

Please describe any event planning or organizing experience you have had. Please list the year and your specific role.

As President-Elect I am expected to help plan the annual summer conference. Below are conference leadership experiences I have had over the past 4 years: - As co-chair of the International ACAC Mentors committee (2018-2021), I helped co-host the First-Timers Event at the summer conference. The event welcomed over 500 newcomers to the conference. The program included helpful information, icebreakers (with prizes), and region-specific breakout groups hosted by our mentor volunteers. When our conference was virtual, we were still able to welcome first-timers through our webinars. - Last year (2022), I organized a reception for our Mentor Year Program participants. From booking the venue to menu planning and coordinating with the vendors while overseas, we were able to celebrate the success of the program by gathering our mentors and our mentees together for a fun evening of fellowship. Ensuring college counselors, university admission officers, and individual members are connected within the International ACAC community is very important to me. During my time in Korea as a college counselor (2007-2019), I was responsible for hosting college visitors. Our school averaged over 150 college visits a year, ranging from individual visits during lunch to evening information sessions that packed our auditorium. I ensured each visitor was cared for with accommodation suggestions, transportation options around town, welcome gifts, and recommendations to some of my favorite Korean BBQ restaurants. Providing hospitality and supporting networking and connectivity are among my favorite parts of the job.

Part of this position is managing people, committees, and projects. What is your experience in this area? Describe your management style.

When I consider how I've engaged with different members of International ACAC, whether as a committee member or as a Board member, I always begin by looking at how I interact with my own family. As a family of five, our relationship centers around respect...with a generous portion of unconditional love. Sometimes, it's tough-love, but love nonetheless. This is how we grow our membership and support one another's differences. Our members come from a variety of backgrounds and have the common purpose of supporting students' transition to higher education within the professional standards of ethics and social responsibility. We are all people with a commitment to serve students. That commitment alone is deserving of one another's respect. As a leader within the organization, I have helped International ACAC become more inclusive and intentional about DEI, led diverse programming, provided professional development, mentored members, and demonstrated a positive attitude while losing at dodgeball at every summer conference. I have also observed and learned from many different leaders within International ACAC, and how their success began with respect and an appreciation for one another. Yes, a slight nudge might be necessary to get the job done, but mutual respect needs to remain our foundation. It's my hope that as your President-Elect, I can continue to model for our Board and our entire membership how to collaborate with one another.

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?

When International ACAC had their DEI review with CIS and Julius Erolin, I was fortunate to serve on the Executive Board at that time, enabling me to fully understand our organization's strengths and opportunities. The following are a few takeaways I want to highlight: 95% of respondents communicated a shared understanding that diversity and inclusion are absolutely essential for our organization's mission. -However, 28% felt dissatisfied and disagreed that our organization is committed to DEI efforts. This was disheartening. Diversity starts with every individual and we have over 3,500 individuals to learn from. -To celebrate our diversity, we must understand who our membership is and how they can be reached. Transparent communication is a growth edge. -Regardless of the work the Board does in support of DEI, if our efforts aren't transparent and clearly communicated, we fail to earn the trust of our membership. If we can comprehend our differences and build bridges rather than dismantle them, we can shift our mindset from being monocultural to intercultural. This will ensure the success of achieving our DEI goals more effectively. We need to be more thoughtful and intentional and less reactionary when it comes to implementing measurable change. There are times when we need to do more than send an email or respond to a post online. As a dedicated member and a person of color on the Executive Board, these changes would remain a top priority as I hold myself and the Board responsible for supporting our DEI initiatives.