



EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS

Only confirmed sessions appear. Titles, presenters, and descriptions are subject to change.

Sessions are listed alphabetically. A schedule will be released at a later date.

*If you would like to make a change to your session, please email Hannah Haage at communication@rmacac.org



Advancing Affordability Literacy for Informed College Planning

Wenie Lado | EAB

Appily's national research shows affordability is the leading factor shaping students' postsecondary decisions. Many students and families lack the affordability literacy needed to understand cost, aid, and value in meaningful ways. This session examines the roots of that gap and offers practical, student-centered strategies to build affordability literacy across the high school experience. Drawing on Appily insights, we'll share clear language, tools, and frameworks counselors can use to support informed conversations, reduce confusion, and empower students to make confident, financially grounded college decisions.

Advocating Through Context: Making School Materials Work for Students

Kylie Duval | University of Tennessee

Selective colleges don't just read applications—they interpret them through the lens of your high school's context. In this session, we'll unpack how admissions officers evaluate school profiles, recommendation letters, and the school report to understand each student's achievements, opportunities, and environment. Participants will learn what information colleges look for, how these documents shape "contextual review," and why strong, clear school materials can elevate an applicant's file. Ideal for counselors and educators, this session offers practical tips for crafting impactful profiles and guiding recommenders, ensuring your students' strengths shine through in a competitive admissions landscape.

Around the World in 60 Minutes: Matching Students with Global Study Destinations

Tara Murphy | London Metropolitan University, Amanda Carroll | James Cook University, Bridie Troy | University College Dublin, Tomoka Mano | University of British Columbia

With a growing number of students seeking to complete their studies abroad, counsellors need tools to navigate an expanding global landscape. This fast-paced, practical session explores four key education systems—Australia, Canada, Ireland, and the UK—to help identify the best fit for each student's learning style, career goals, and budget. Through interactive activities, participants will assess student profiles to determine fit while examining the pros and cons of studying overseas. Representatives from each country will share insights on admissions, funding, safety, and culture, plus guidance on accessing international counsellor tours and local networks to confidently support students' global ambitions.

Beyond the Discount: How Tuition Savings Programs Benefit Students, Families, States and Institutions in the West

Malerie Barnes | WICHE, Sophia Harris | WICHE

This session will highlight the ways that tuition savings programs such as the Western Undergraduate Exchange Program (WUE) and the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) can benefit students, families, institutions, and the region. We will discuss the current landscape of postsecondary education, including tuition and savings trends in the West over the last decade, research related to the family financial burden of higher education, the impending enrollment cliff, student migration patterns, and shifting federal aid policies. We will consider the ways that tuition reciprocity programs fit into this bigger context to bolster both student access and institutional and regional prosperity.



Beyond the Transcript: Guiding Teachers to Write Effective LORs

Burnie Dymont | Brophy College Preparatory, Bryan Tomlison | Brophy College Preparatory, Mirela Connor | Brophy College Preparatory, Oscar Barboa | Brophy College Preparatory

This session is designed for college counselors seeking to elevate the quality and streamline the integrity of their teacher Letters of Recommendation (LORs). We will share concrete strategies for coaching faculty to move beyond generic descriptions and focus on specific, illustrative anecdotes that illuminate a student's intellectual promise, classroom presence, and character. We will also address best practices for procedural structure, including managing submissions through platforms like MaiaLearning and handling direct college links (e.g., Questbridge, Georgetown). Walk away with clear, actionable steps for improving your LOR pipeline and reducing administrative friction for both your office and your faculty.

Bridging the Gap: Strengthening High School-College Pathways for First-Gen and Underrepresented Students

Brooke Gabrielli | Cherokee Trail High School, Brooke Geraghty | Colorado Mesa University

Equitable access to higher education requires collaboration between high schools and colleges. This session explores practical strategies for bridging the gap between K-12 and postsecondary institutions through inclusive outreach, clear communication, holistic support, and the power of collectivity.

Participants will learn how colleges can expand access through targeted recruitment, culturally responsive outreach, and transparent financial guidance. From the high school perspective, we will examine how counselor language, advising practices, and early exposure to college pathways influences access to higher education. We will highlight the power of cross-institutional partnerships that align resources, build trust, and create seamless pathways to opportunity.

Collabs over Crab Legs: Building Community Relationships with Intentional Partnerships

Julia Correa | Westminster University, Char Crear | Westminster University, Kevellin Sanders | University of Utah

Join us for a dynamic session designed for Community-Based Organizations, high school counselors, and college admissions professionals. Discover how intentional partnerships can transform outreach and access, strengthen counselor connections, and elevate existing initiatives. We'll explore effective marketing strategies tailored to unique regional challenges, share lessons on growing impactful programming, and uncover ways to leverage third spaces for deeper engagement. Learn practical tips to attract strong and collaborative networks that drive student success. Walk away with actionable strategies to build sustainable, community-driven partnerships that make a lasting impact.

Degrees Without Borders: University Pathways for Globally Minded Students

Emily Grubbe | Butler University, Michaela Rogan | Saint Luis University – Madrid, Amber Featherstone | Minerva University, Lindsay Parker | Kunshan University

What happens when the world becomes your classroom? Explore U.S. universities that immerse students abroad for most of their college experience -- earning a fully accredited American degree while studying across continents. Hear how four innovative institutions are reimagining global education, shaping adaptable graduates, and offering unique opportunities for internationally minded students.



Eliminating the Stigma – Exploring the Robust Community College Experience

Janelle Bonavida | Front Range Community College, Krista Boddy | Front Range Community College

College students often struggle with attending classes, paying tuition, achieving a bachelor's degree in 4 years, or entering the workforce with credentials. Even after national conversations about the benefits of community/junior colleges, many students still consider two-year institutions their last choice when it comes to higher education. According to a Community College Research Center (CCRC) analysis, community colleges enrolled 8.6 million students in the 2022-23 academic year, making up 40% of undergraduate students. From saving money, to small classrooms size, to university transfer options, to apprenticeships, to career and technical programs, we'll help you understand the benefits of community colleges.

Fill Your Cup - Intentional Planning for a Meaningful Year

Breanna Clark | University of Northern Colorado

In the busyness of our professional lives, it's easy to plan around deadlines and deliverables. But what about the things that truly energize and sustain us? This interactive workshop invites you to intentionally design a year that supports both your personal well-being and professional growth.

- Brainstorm what you actually want to do: the big goals and the small wins.
- Discover simple tools to track progress and stay accountable.

Leave with a motivating plan that fuels your energy, strengthens your connections, and keeps you focused on what matters most. When you design your joy on purpose, success follows naturally.

Finding your fit in Admissions

Abby Tudor | Northern Arizona University

We focus so much about students finding the right fit for college, but how can you find your fit in admissions? Tip, tricks and stories that helped shape my career in admissions, and that may be helpful for you as you decide if admissions is your fit, or how to keep going when things get repetitive, cyclical and hard.

From Silos to Synergy: Building Collaborative Pathways for Student Success

Keyshon Cooks | Peak Education, Jazmin Talley | Peak Education

Our session highlights the partnership between Peak Education (A CO. Springs local non-profit organization that prioritizes student access to higher education) and Colorado Springs District 11, showcasing how collaboration supports college and career readiness through Future Centers. Key discussion topics include; building and sustaining school partnerships, hosting events to change school culture, finding funding, data sharing agreements, parent engagement and challenges. Participants will engage in interactive activities exploring effective collaboration, identifying internal and external partners, defining roles, and mapping shared responsibilities.



Growing With Students: Exploring College Decision Trends

Emily Ross | Eduventures

Understanding how students make college decisions has never been more important. As students' perspectives shift, admissions professionals must also adapt, meeting students where they are. Drawing on years of Eduventures research, this session explores national trends in students' motivations, expectations, and perceptions, with special attention to students from the Rocky Mountain region. This session will illuminate the perspectives and priorities shaping students' college choices today. Attendees will gain actionable guidance to refresh messaging, outreach, and engagement strategies that meaningfully connect with students in an evolving enrollment environment.

Grumpy Old Men (and Women): What's Next for Seasoned School Counseling and Admission Pros?

Damien Bracey | Valley Vista High School, Diane Campbell | Liberty Common School, Michelle Raisich | Rowland Hall, Ralph Figueroa | Albuquerque Academy, Kasey Urquidez | Higher Education at ACT

After decades of guiding students, families, and institutions through school counseling and admissions, many professionals ask, "What's next?" This candid session brings together seasoned veterans exploring their next chapter—stepping into retirement, moving to the other side of the desk in college or independent school admissions, launching an independent consulting practice, or joining a for-profit education company.

Panelists share lessons learned, practical advice, and personal reflections on transition, reinvention, and purpose after a long, meaningful career. Whether you're a veteran nearing your next act or an emerging leader curious about what lies ahead, the session promises honesty, laughter, and valuable perspective.

High-Impact, Low-Prep: Integrating College and Career Counseling With Large Caseloads

Cindy Black | New Mexico Highlands University

Counselors with large caseloads can deliver strong college and career readiness (CCR) support by leveraging strategic partnerships and smart technology. This session shares low-prep, high-impact strategies that tap into collaborations with teachers, community organizations, and college/career partners to extend counselor reach. Participants will explore tech-enabled tools—automated messaging, digital trackers, virtual workshops, and CCR platforms—that streamline communication and student engagement. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use templates and a personalized mini-plan for integrating CCR services efficiently, equitably, and sustainably across school-wide systems.

K'é (kinship) and Ea (self-determination) in College Counseling: Reimagining Postsecondary Outcomes and Best Practices through Cross-cultural and Indigenous-centered Curriculum and Program Development

Sam Bader | Navajo Preparatory School, Ashley Makahilahila | Kamehameha School, Denise Jensen | Navajo Preparatory School, Lisa Atcitty | Navajo Preparatory School

College counselors of Native American and Native Hawaiian ancestry working in secondary education come together to provide a culturally grounded framework for postsecondary advising for indigenous youth. Through the nuance and unique needs of our communities, we find common onto-epistemological, historical, and decolonial threads that weave together to form a collective indigeneity and cross-cultural kinship, uplifting indigenous students similarly across oceans of potential. We offer ways for developing models for college counseling curriculum and best practices that uplift indigenous communities, as we come together to support youth from all indigenous backgrounds in the Rocky Mountain region and beyond.



Navigating Conversations with Clarity and Compassion: Resources for Difficult Situations

Roslyn Fletcher | Great Hearts Academies, Alison Westerlind | Ascent Consulting Group

Join us for an adventure in building self-awareness and communication strategies that will empower you to deliver messages clearly, concisely, and compassionately. We'll focus on navigating difficult conversations with students, parents, and colleagues, and equip counselors with new tools to foster relationships with effective communication. Learn to effectively communicate and advise through understanding your communication style and potential blind spots and building awareness of others. Walk away with resources to apply inside and outside the office to be clear, kind, and become confident during difficult conversations. Reframe the story you tell yourself and learn to create a win-win for all.

Navigating NIL: Empowering Counselors to Guide Student-Athletes Toward Long-Term Success

Jeff Hiser | Polaris Athlete

The rise of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) opportunities has reshaped how student-athletes approach college admissions and athletic recruitment. This session equips counselors to help student-athletes leverage their individual interests, strengths, and goals through NIL opportunities. Rather than viewing NIL solely as an athletic or financial tool, participants will learn to use it as a springboard for academic, personal, and career development—guiding students toward meaningful, sustainable success beyond their athletic careers.

No Cap, Only Clout: Info Sessions that Don't Flop

Guila Curley | Newcomb High School

Today's high schoolers grew up on TikTok, not textbooks. Traditional college info sessions—the 60-minute, slide-heavy, data-dump lecture—are massive vibe killers that fail to capture their attention. This is particularly true for rural students and other populations where college admission and actual matriculation may be a stretch. This session is a chance to transform passive presentations into dynamic, hands-on, interactive experiences. We will ditch the static slides and explore actionable strategies to boost engagement. Learn how to empower prospective students, give them a voice, and make your admissions session feel less like a homework assignment and more like their main character moment.

Passport to Enrollment: Recruiting International and Domestic Students Wherever they Study

Pauline Przywara | University of Arizona, Elizabet Woche | University of Arizona

As recruiters and high school counselors, we encounter students from all backgrounds and in different scenarios when they apply to university. How do you support international students who are already living in the U.S. and domestic students who are abroad? This session will provide an overview of what to look for, how to proceed, and how to advise your students.



Ralph and Dean Talk College and TSPMO

Rafael Figueroa | Albuquerque Academy, Dean Jacoby | Albuquerque Academy

Join veteran counselors and long-time collaborators Ralph Figueroa and Dean Jacoby as they reflect on a combined 67 years in college access work. This presentation will cast an acerbic eye over current trends, issues, and things that, um, get their blood boiling. At the heart of their concerns lies the question, “How are we centering students and access in this process?”

Acknowledging their status as the “Statler and Waldorf” of the admissions profession, these two curmudgeons plan on speaking plainly, hopefully injecting some humor, and holding nothing back ... They want to hear your thoughts about needed changes in the profession. You really want to be there.

Reevaluate180- A Human-Centered Career Guidance Platform for Lifelong Satisfaction and Success

Tara Seger | Reevaluate 180

Reevaluate180 empowers guidance counselors to help students pursue dreams they never imagined by revealing the intrinsic motivators that drive them. Our AI-powered insights give counselors clarity and direction, ensuring students are guided toward careers that offer both success and lifelong fulfillment. No longer will counselors face the challenge of a student saying, “I have no idea what I want to do for a career.” Instead, they’ll have clear, personalized feedback reports that illuminate what inspires each student, what may hinder their growth, and which career paths align with offering them meaningful and satisfying futures. Reevaluate180 turns guidance into lasting impact.

Come for the Starbucks gift cards—leave with answers students have been pursuing for years.

Rural Roots to College Routes: A Collaborative Working Session

Brooke Gabrielli | Cherokee Trail High School, Erin Cummins-Roper | Animas High School

This session is designed to be a working session to actively address items identified to increase college access for students who reside and attend school in rural areas across the RMACAC region. We will focus on implementing goals and action items identified through the Rural SIG. This session will be collaborative and active--we invite all members of the Rural SIG and any other members who are passionate about increasing access for our rural communities to attend.

Saguaro-Sized Support: Scaling Parent Programs From 9–12

Coral Azarian | Rowland Hall, Michelle Rasich | Rowland Hall

Parent programs shouldn’t reinvent the wheel, they should reinforce the roadmap. This year, in response to rising demand, our office launched a virtual parent program series for grades 9–12, grounded in the NACAC Top Factors in Admissions. We expanded the scope to address family-forward needs including athletic recruiting, affordability and scholarships, and guidance for first-generation American households navigating U.S. admissions. By repurposing prior counselor presentations and re-packaging them into intentional, audience-ready formats, we minimized net-new session creation and built a sustainable, recorded resource library for families to revisit anytime. This session shares outcomes, program design decisions, and a low-lift implementation framework centered on resilience, trust, and long-term accessibility.

Selecting Who to Admit to Reach Enrollment Goals: Strategy or Guesswork?

Amy Hutton | University of Colorado Boulder, Kate Stricklan | University of Colorado Boulder

Ever wondered what it takes to determine the strategy of who to admit to a selective institution? This session will focus on the tools needed to build an effective strategy to ensure enrollment targets are met, without over or under enrolling. This session is built for anyone interested in learning to build this type of strategy, whether it's part of your current role or not. For most, this training is learned on the job, but not until you're a director or higher. This is your chance to learn not only from an experienced Vice Chancellor and her amazing team, but from a former professor of statistics. If you hear "professor of statistics" and want to run screaming, be assured that this former professor dances in class and lets the robots do the math. Fun and laughter guaranteed, with some cool learning.

Standing Tall Among Government Policy Changes: How to Serve Students and Advocate for Education in the Current Context

Nick Grenoble | Waterford School, Henry Whipple | DSST Public Schools, Abby Tudor | Northern Arizona University

In this era of rapid policy shifts, counselors and admissions officers play a critical role in helping students navigate uncertainty. This session will review recent federal and state changes affecting college access with a focus on how we can best serve students in the current political context. Participants will gain practical strategies to advocate for educational access and adapt our professional practices to both the current landscape and forecasted barriers.

Standing tall and growing new branches: sustaining balance in counseling and consulting

Lauren Lieberman | Steamboat Mountain School, Diane Campbell | Liberty Common School, Randy Mills | Greenhill School

In an evolving educational landscape, many college counselors and admissions professionals are expanding their impact beyond their primary roles—taking on consulting, side hustles, leadership in community organizations, and passion-driven projects. This session explores how to cultivate a sustainable professional identity while branching into new opportunities. Together, we will share strategies for managing workload, maintaining ethical boundaries, and aligning outside endeavors with institutional responsibilities. Participants will leave with practical tools for protecting their well-being, strengthening their professional core, and confidently growing new branches without losing balance at the root.

Standing Tall in Enrollment: Resilient Strategies for Inquiry Response and Growth

Dr. Dale Seipp | Liaison

What does the data say about how colleges respond to prospective students—and why does it matter? This session dives into findings from Liaison's comprehensive study of 432 institutions, uncovering trends in speed, personalization, and channel usage. Learn about the four pillars of effective communication and how they directly impact inquiry-to-enrollment conversion. Walk away with evidence-based strategies to benchmark your performance and optimize your recruitment communications.



Standing Tall in Your True Colors: Leading, Growing, and Thriving Authentically

Tina Spears | University of Arizona, Victoria Castro | University of Arizona

In today's ever-changing environment, resilience and growth are essential for success. This interactive session uses the True Colors Personality Framework to help participants better understand themselves and others, strengthen communication, and build resilience through authentic leadership. Attendees will explore how their dominant personality color shows up during stress, change, and challenge, and how leaning into strengths, while stretching beyond comfort zones, supports meaningful growth. Through reflection and discussions, participants will gain strategies to stand tall in adversity, work more effectively with others, and lead with greater confidence and purpose.

Supporting Neurodivergent Students Through the College and Transition Process

Aurora Medina | Denver Academy, Monet Duhamel | Denver Academy, Casie Myers | Denver Academy

Supporting neurodivergent students through the college and transition process requires intentional scaffolding, self-advocacy development, and individualized planning.

Join Denver Academy's College & Transition Team as they share how they support students with ASD, ADHD, dyslexia, and other learning differences in understanding how they learn best, navigating post-secondary options, and identifying "Best Fit" pathways using DA's Readiness for Success Survey. This session will outline the program's scope and sequence, with an emphasis on career exploration and college readiness.

Test Optional Resilience: Best Practices & Case Studies for Counseling Students through Ambiguous Test Score Policies

Nick Grenoble | Waterford School, Gregg Murray | Revolution Prep, Sheila Hallsted-Baumert | Revolution Prep

This session will focus on students in the middle range who face the most uncertainty about whether sharing a score will help or hinder their application. We will explore best practices to empower counselors as they guide these decisions and review case studies across student profiles, from those who may avoid remedial courses by submitting scores to high achievers aiming to strengthen applications to selective colleges.

The Working Parent Hustle: Real Strategies for Real Life

Lauran Williamson | Williamson College Prep, Katherine Price | College Mindset, Coral Azarian | Rowland Hall, Nicole Fratto Garcia | Trinity University, Jon Mires | Hastings College

You excel at deadlines, recommendation letters, and detailed calendars—but what about your relationships and your own well-being? If you've ever planned the perfect kid's birthday party yet forgot to review an essay or application, this session is for you. Join school counselors, admissions professionals, and independent consultants, who are also parents, to share practical, realistic working parent strategies. Learn how to prioritize what matters most, set healthy boundaries, and build sustainable routines that support both your career and your family. Leave with ideas to create stronger balance, less burnout, and more confidence (or at least some solidarity).



Transfer Roundtable: Real Challenges, Real Solutions

Katie Stites / Colorado State University

Join colleagues from two- and four-year institutions for an open, solutions-focused roundtable on the biggest barriers facing community college transfer students. We'll dig into credit evaluation, advising gaps, recruitment hurdles, and partnership opportunities to crowdsource actionable ideas you can take back to your campus.