



# THE EDUCATION CONSERVANCY

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## AN OVERVIEW

### DESCRIPTION

The Education Conservancy (EC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working with leaders in higher education to overhaul college admissions policies and practices.

### MISSION

- To make the college admissions system more student-centered and educationally beneficial for students, families, high schools, and colleges.
- To stimulate leadership that will align admission practices with education principles.
- To highlight the educational potential of the college admissions process.

### STRATEGY AND TACTICS

EC harnesses the research, ideas, leadership, and imagination of thoughtful educators, and delivers pertinent advice, advocacy, and services. Our goals are to:

- **Change public perceptions and behavior** of students, families, and high schools by providing meaningful advice, guidance, services, and resources.
- **Change institutional practices** by raising questions, articulating vision, conducting research, leading discussions, convening meetings, and developing policy recommendations.
- **Identify and encourage leadership** by promoting colleges and practices that raise the ethical bar.

### FUNDING

We receive funding through grants, private and institutional donations, book sales, public speaking, and consulting. Contributors include the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, and more than 100 colleges, as well as numerous schools, school districts, organizations, and individual donors.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. **The EC is facilitating conversations that are advancing changes in admissions practices and college counseling.**
  - a. **“Beyond Ranking: Responding to the Call For Useful Information”:** A campaign that began with the convening of 100+ professionals at Yale University in Fall 2008 to spearhead the development of a robust system of guidance and information for college selection. 31 colleges pledged \$150,000 to this project, the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor foundation offered a \$300,000 Matching Challenge grant, a prototype Web site was developed, and related partnerships have been established with Consumers Union and the College Board.
  - b. **Beyond Ranking Letter:** Presidents and chancellors from 67 public and private institutions have signed an EC letter pledging to disengage from the rankings and work together to develop viable alternatives. A similar letter was signed by leaders of 20 highly selective Liberal Arts colleges. This effort has been credited for declining participation in the *US News* reputational survey of college leaders (from 67% in 2002 to 46% in 2008).
  - c. **In The Public Interest: Imagining an Exemplary College Admission System:** A grant was awarded from the Spencer Foundation to support the first in a series of meetings to envision an exemplary college admission system. Initial meeting held 1/15/10 at NYU’s Steinhardt Institute.
  - d. **Admission Practices Reform:** Colleges are employing EC research, publications, and consulting services to inform their decision-making in policy areas including Early Decision/Early Action, financial aid, standardized testing, and trustee training.
  - e. **High School Counseling:** High schools are employing EC research, publications, and consulting services to improve their college counseling efforts.

2. **The EC conducted pilot research on how the current admission system affects student attitudes and behaviors.**  
 “College Admissions: What Are Students Learning?” was an exploratory study to gain insight into student experiences and perspectives about the college applications process for high achieving students applying to highly selective colleges. The project was supported by the Spencer Foundation, Drew University, Southwestern University, Yale University, Harvard University, Dartmouth College, MIT, ACT, and The College Board.
3. **The EC has built a network of champions from inside and outside higher education, has become the leading source for national media on college admissions issues, and has leveraged support and attention to encourage action.**
  - a. Articles about the EC have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Education*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Seattle Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *London Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Oregonian*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Education Week*, *Business Week*, *Time*, *Hispanic Outlook* and other outlets.
  - b. The EC’s director has delivered more than 200 speeches to groups of college trustees, college presidents, admission deans, parents and students, high school communities, counselors, and professional organizations. The EC has helped establish advocacy groups among deans, counselors, and parents.
  - c. The EC’s director has appeared on PBS’s *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, CBS’s *Evening News*, NBC’s *Today*, CNN, NPR, and various radio talk shows.
  - d. The EC has published articles appearing in numerous influential publications, including *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Trusteeship*, and *The Times of London*.
  - e. The EC consulted on (and was featured in) the *Dan Rather Reports* episode “Stress Test: Getting Into College,” available on the iTunes Web site.
4. **The EC has become a leader in the field of admission reform by providing ideas, and resources, and helping to establish standards that are being embraced nationally and internationally.**
  - a. College Unranked, originally published by the EC and republished by Harvard University Press, has sold more than 14,000 copies and has been translated into Korean.
  - b. EC provides a wealth of useful and free information via its Web site, such as “We Admit...Guidance From Those Who Do,” guiding principles and advice for parents and students, and used by colleges, universities, and schools nationwide.
  - c. More than 500 colleges, schools, and organizations are linked to the EC Web site.

## CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS

1. **Partnership with Consumers Union** to establish new standards for college assessment information and develop a tool for students to evaluate sources of information and colleges accordingly. Grant funding awarded from Lumina Foundation for Education.
2. **Consultancy with the College Board** to develop a student-centric, non-commercial, and educationally driven source of guidance to improve access and help all students navigate the college selection and admission process successfully.
3. **Making the Case for Change in College Admissions.** In collaboration with USC’s Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice, this workshop of thinkers, scholars, and enrollment professionals will formulate a framework for changing selective college admissions. January 26-28, 2011 at USC.
4. **Collaborating in the Public Interest** to address the Antitrust Hurdle. What can be done to reconcile higher education’s public mission with the Department of Justice’s 1991 decision regarding the Overlap Group Agreements? EC is initiating a long-range comprehensive project by presenting a session at the Council of Independent Colleges’ 2011 Presidents Institute, “Collaborative Approaches to Student Aid Policy.”