

Rocky Mountain Association for College Admissions Counseling

Strategic Plan
September 2009–2012

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Methodology

The Executive Board of the Rocky Mountain Association for College Admissions Counseling (RMACAC) met in Tucson, AZ, in April 2008 for its annual spring meeting. During this meeting, they conducted a SWOT analysis to examine the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. From that conversation, themes emerged that provided the foundation for the Strategic Plan. The board continued its work on the plan during the summer and fall and presented the goals of the plan to membership in the spring 2009 at the annual conference. The board then integrated membership feedback into the plan and posted the approved document on the RMACAC website in June 2009.

This is the first time the RMACAC board has presented strategic elements of a plan to the membership for comment. The hope is that the membership will help the board refine the plan and that in years to come RMACAC membership will take an active role in defining the goals of the association.

Overview

In creating the strategic plan draft, we recognized the strength of our developing board; the association's deep experience in the field of college transition; its representation from all five states, high schools, colleges, and independent counseling; as well as the participation of diverse types of institutions. We also recognized that we have a stable but somewhat fragile membership, relatively strong financial health, and a growing and diverse student population served by member institutions.

The challenges that RMACAC faces revolve around its being a younger, multi-state organization with states that are less populated and represent a growing diversity among rural and urban areas as well as students from a wide variety of backgrounds. External challenges include a worsening economy and the states' growing student populations comprised of mostly first-generation and newly immigrated families. We also recognize that the organization's income streams are largely reliant upon two factors: membership dues and college fairs.

Mission and Vision

The mission of the Rocky Mountain Association for College Admissions Counseling (RMACAC) is to support and advance the work of counselors as they help students realize their full educational potential with particular emphasis on the transition from secondary schools to colleges and universities and with attention to access and equity, including college readiness, for all students.

RMACAC fulfills its mission by providing services, programs, and opportunities for members so they can serve and assist students in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

Constituencies We Serve

- Admission officers
- High school guidance, career, and transition counselors
- Independent educational counselors/consultants
- Students
- Parents, family members, and all who serve students
- Community members such as the media and legislatures
- Community-based organizations

2009–2012 Goals

The goals of the RMACAC board are to:

1. Increase RMACAC's visibility and differentiate its purpose within the five-state region making it a) the primary organization counselors and admission officers refer to for college transition advice and professional development; and b) the primary organization legislators and media contact for issues concerning college choice and college counseling.
2. Strengthen collaborative efforts with local, state, and national organizations, foundations, and community-based organizations, resulting in partnerships and alliances in each of the five states by 2012.
3. Assess, increase, and improve professional development activities in the five-state region, and offer professional development opportunities in all five states for both counselors and admission officers by 2012.
4. Analyze, strengthen, and diversify financial streams resulting in an increase in revenue, new identified streams and monitored spending.
5. Examine membership trends, improve value and increase membership in each state.
6. Increase member involvement in RMACAC/NACAC by working with partner organizations to build broad public support for higher education in all states in the region and prepare our members to become "go-to" constituents for state and national legislators regarding high school to postsecondary transition issues.

Three-Year Goals, Action Items, and Measures

Strategic Goal I:

Increase RMACAC's visibility and differentiate its purpose within the five-state region making it a) the primary organization counselors and admission officers refer to for college transition advice and professional development; and b) the primary organization legislators and media contact for issues concerning college choice and college counseling.

Year One: 2009–2010

Action Items

1. Improve communication between board members.
 - a. Divide the duties of committee chairs and delegates between the positions of president, past president and president elect for contact and responsibility throughout the year.
 - b. Recruit a technology coordinator.
 - c. Maintain regular email communication between board meetings.
2. Enhance communication between the board and the general membership.
 - a. Increase usage of the list serv.
 - b. Promote RMACAC membership on the web.
 - c. List schools by category to assist those that support students.
 - d. Use the RMACAC website to publicize information on the developments of the board's strategic plan activities.
 - e. Determine how to better utilize technology for most communication functions.
 - i. Communication and technology chairs meet to discuss optimal website architecture and navigation. Ideas include: interactive map of high schools and colleges, interactive regional calendar of events with hot links provided, resource library containing downloadable handouts, presentations and resources for members to use, mapping functions between among member schools, High School Profiles at the push of a button, member access to RMACAC colleagues who are available for presentations and workshop events, Members-Only portion of our website to encourage direct contact and cooperation, and mentorship program-counselors and college admissions personnel
 - ii. Chairs discuss best way for delegate and committee chairs to request updates.
 - iii. Communication chair sends emails to membership three times per year driving them to the web.
 - iv. The board will study the effectiveness of the newsletter to grow membership along with new ways of circulating newsletter to members.
3. Develop branding and visibility.
 - a. Ask member colleges and high schools to add a link to RMACAC on their admissions web page for counselors.
 - b. List all colleges in the five-state region on the RMACAC website and add links to member colleges and high schools.

- c. Have a staffed RMACAC table at the spring Denver college fairs to assist both students and counselors with college transition questions.
- d. Create RMACAC give-aways/schwag, such as pins, t-shirts or notepads, for the conference and provide nametags for the board.
- 4. Expand board member visibility.
 - a. Advertise current roles when RMACAC presents anywhere.
 - b. Ask board members to attend their state college fairs and present whenever possible.
- 5. Provide education to members regarding how to promote RMACAC.
 - a. Circulate “things to do” as a volunteer at the spring conference.
 - b. Conduct a new member orientation at the annual conference to outline service and volunteer opportunities at RMACAC.
- 6. Consult NACAC and brainstorm how RMACAC could work with the media.
 - a. Use communication coordinator position as a link to media relations.
 - b. Create a press release template that could be used to issue information to the press in the five-state region.
 - c. Create a speakers bureau and determine what training is needed.

Measures

- 1. Each committee chair and delegate will know who their presidential representative is and will have had communication with the representative between the winter and spring board meetings.
- 2. A technology chair will be appointed.
- 3. The list serv will be used by schools and colleges more frequently to post vacant positions, announce training opportunities, and share ideas.
- 4. The web will be current, will have multiple new features, including links to the universities as well as training opportunities in the region.
- 5. A plan for website development will be created and its use for communication with membership.
- 6. RMACAC will have a visible presence at the spring Denver college fair and the conference with t-shirts and schwag that provide contact information/website.
- 7. The board will recruit new volunteers to serve on each committee by the end of the spring conference.
- 8. The communications chair will create a plan for RMACAC public relations.
- 9. The communications relations chair will have a clear vision for the organization’s newsletter and will have worked with the technology chair to implement it.
- 10. A new member orientation will be held at the spring 2010 conference.

Year Two: 2010–2011

Action Items

- 1. Enhance communication between the board and general membership.
 - a. Update on strategic planning should occur with general membership at NACAC New Orleans.
 - b. Board president should send thank-you notes to RMACAC college fair organizers after each fair.
 - c. Provide regular update of activities to the membership via the list serv.

- d. Delegates and committee members work regularly with the communications chair to enhance the website with news stories, events, and profiles.
- 2. Develop branding and visibility.
 - a. Have a staffed RMACAC table at each of fall and spring college fairs in order to help both students and counselors with college transition questions.
 - b. Request a RMACAC counselor table at popular non-RMACAC fairs, such as the Cherry Creek fair, the Santa Fe fair, the NACAC Phoenix fair, etc.
 - c. Share give-a-ways/schwag with folks who coordinate RMACAC college fairs and conferences.
 - d. Increase RMACAC board role in the development of the New Mexico and Utah fairs.
 - e. Have a RMACAC presence at the NACAC Phoenix fair.
- 3. Expand board member visibility.
 - a. Advertise current roles in RMACAC when presenting anywhere.
- 4. RMACAC media relations.
 - a. Issue press releases to support the college fairs and spring conference and prepare a story ideas about the role that RMACAC members play in college transitions for the youth in the five-state region.
- 5. Broaden RMACAC presence.
 - a. Have a RMACAC board member or volunteer attend or present at each state and regional like-minded organization's conference or college fair.

Measures

- 1. Emails driving membership to the web will be sent three times per year and the web will be populated with exciting and educational content.
- 2. There will be an increased presence at all RMACAC activities.
- 3. One press release will be issued about RMACAC activities that will generate media coverage.

Year Three: 2011–2012

Action Items

- 1. Board members continue to make a presence at college fairs.
- 2. RMACAC board members continue to reach out to other counseling organizations and offer to support their events.
- 3. The Communications Chair releases press releases for all RMACAC events and pitches a counseling transitions story to a local reporter.
- 4. Delegates and committee members work regularly with the Communications Chairs to update the website with news stories, events, and profiles.

Measures

- 1. Three emails with a purpose of driving membership to the web will be sent over the course of the year, and the web will be populated with exciting and educational content.
- 2. Board members will present at conferences with partner organizations in all five states.

3. RMACAC will have an information/counseling booth at all RMACAC college fairs and at least one other fair in each state.
4. Local media coverage will be given for all RMACAC college fairs.
5. Reporters will seek out RMACAC spokespeople for stories related to college access and transition.

Strategic Goal 2:

Increase collaborative efforts with local, state, and national organizations; foundations; and community-based organizations resulting in partnerships and alliances in each of the five states by 2012.

Year One: 2009–2010

Action Items

1. Make greater connections to NACAC.
 - a. Build bridges to NACAC committees by having each RMACAC committee chair contact the national chair.
 - b. Attend counterpart meetings at annual NACAC conference as well as join appropriate national listserv for each member.
 - c. Help to make national committees relevant to the region by sharing the issues that are pressing for our membership.
2. Connect with state counseling associations.
 - a. Have one delegate from each state research the counseling and like-minded organizations in their state including community-based organizations.
 - b. Research when they host their professional development programs and offer to support them with a RMACAC presence.
 - c. Have RMACAC board members make connections with boards of organizations.
 - d. Have the delegate or board members assess what professional development opportunities RMACAC could offer to support their constituents.
3. Adopt the Joint Public School Outreach Program in partnership with NACAC.
 - a. Promote the program through the RMACAC website, newsletter and college fairs.
 - b. Implement the program.

Measures

1. All committee chairs will know their national liaison and will be in quarterly contact with them concerning issues in the Rocky Mountain region.
2. RMACAC will be connected to at least one new organization in each state.
3. RMACAC will now be members of the Joint Public School Outreach Program.

Year Two: 2010–2011

Action Items

1. Continue committee relations with NACAC.
 - a. Committee chairs would continue regular communication with NACAC.
 - b. At least one more RMACAC member would run for a national committee seat.

2. RMACAC members join boards or meet with other counseling organizations and CBOs in order to share information, strengthen partnerships, and support one another.
3. Connect with state counseling associations.
 - a. Have RMACAC delegates from each state research and annually update the counseling and like-minded organizations in their state, including community-based organizations.
 - b. Research when they host their professional development programs and offer to support them with a RMACAC presence.
 - c. Have RMACAC board members make connections with their counterparts on boards of organizations.
 - d. Have the delegate or board members assess what professional development opportunities RMACAC could offer to support their constituents.
 - e. RMACAC members speak or offer trainings at regional CBO and counseling conferences or professional development programs.

Measures

1. RMACAC will have a greater presence on national committees and continues to submit at least six applications from the region each year.
2. RMACAC will have a role in supporting at least one non-RMACAC professional development opportunity in each state.
3. At least one RMACAC member will be a board member of another college transition organization.

Year Three: 2011–2012

Action Items

1. Connect with state counseling associations.
 - a. Continue to have delegates from each state research the counseling and like-minded organizations in their state, including community-based organizations. Lists should be updated on an annual basis.
 - b. Find out when they host their professional development programs and offer to support them with a RMACAC presence.
 - c. Have RMACAC board members make connections with boards of organizations.
 - d. Have the delegate or board members assess what professional development opportunities RMACAC could offer to support their constituents
2. RMACAC members join boards of other counseling organizations and CBOs in order to share information, make relations, and support one another.
3. RMACAC will forward six names from the membership for consideration to national committees and board positions.

Measures

1. RMACAC will hold committee chair seat on at least one national committee.
2. At least one RMACAC member will be a board member of another college transition organization.
3. RMACAC will host an additional professional development opportunity in addition to Keeping Options Open, Legislative Days, and Spring Conference in the region.

4. RMACAC will be present at additional state and regional organizations professional development opportunities.

Strategic Goal 3:

Assess, increase and improve professional development activities in our region, and offer professional development opportunities in all five states for both counselors and admission officers by 2012.

Year One: 2009–2010

Action Items

1. Determine RMACAC needs for professional development by specific state. Survey members and non-members via web-based program, at the NACAC and RMACAC membership meetings, and at state-level counseling conferences.
2. Collate a list of current professional development activities in each state.
3. Research what other ACAC's are doing in their regions to promote professional development.
4. Create a professional development committee for RMACAC with representation from each state, including high school, postsecondary, community-based organizations, and independent counselors.
5. Apply for a NACAC Presidential Grant to fund attendance for RMACAC members to attend NACAC and RMACAC conferences.
6. Solidify RMACAC board positions by developing written job descriptions for each position.

Measures

1. The professional development committee will complete an extensive survey of membership regarding professional development needs and current opportunities in the region.
2. The professional development chair will recruit a diverse committee.
3. The professional development committee will research PD activities in other ACAC's.
4. The professional development committee will apply for a NACAC Presidential Grant.
5. The RMACAC board will write job descriptions for each board position.

Year Two: 2010–2011

Action Items

1. Develop a multi-year professional development plan for each state that is based on needs assessment.
2. Implement at least one professional program in two states from the multi-year plan listed above. Possibilities include:
 - Online webinar for rural areas
 - Multiple mini-sessions in urban, public schools
 - Extensions of the Keeping Options Open (KOO) program or Mini-KOO program
3. Explore grant funding for professional development initiatives.
4. Provide professional development for RMACAC Board.
 - Decide on areas of professional development for the board such as public speaking, marketing, diversity work, leadership development, grant writing, etc.

- Organized one board development activity.
- Create notebook or E-folder associated with each board position that can be updated and passed on.
- Create a web file or portal for keeping and sharing copies of all board documents via Google or Box.com.

Measures

1. The professional development committee will create a multi-year plan for professional development by state.
2. The professional development committee will investigate funding sources for professional development initiatives.
3. The professional development committee will implement at least one professional development project in two states.
4. The RMACAC board will decide on areas for professional development and will implement one development activity.
5. The RMACAC board members will develop a notebook or E-folder for each position.
6. The technology chair will establish a web file or portal for board documents via Google or Box.com.

Year Three: 2011–2012

Action Items

1. Build professional development into each RMACAC board meeting.
2. Implement at least one professional program in three-five states from the multi-year plan listed above.

Measures

1. The board will undergo another professional training program.
2. The professional development committee will implement training programs in each of the five states.

Increase and improve professional development and offer multiple opportunities in all five states for both counselors and admission officers by 2012.

Strategic Goal 4:

Analyze, strengthen and diversify financial streams resulting in an increase in revenue, new identified streams and monitored spending.

Year One: 2009-2010

Action Items

1. Determine the financial viability of the organization by analyzing five years of expenses and revenue.
2. Solidify current financial streams.
 - a. Analyze membership fee structure. In particular, RMACAC needs to review its fees in relation to other that of other ACACs, the economy of the states in our region, and the amount of worth RMACAC membership offers.

- b. Secure college fairs by improving relations with local committees.
3. Implement measures to stop resource drain.
4. Gather budget and expense information from KOO and the three RMACAC college fairs.

Measures

1. Five-year study will be completed.
2. Analysis of membership fees in comparison with other ACACs will be complete and a recommendation to the board will be made.
3. Areas of over expenditure will be identified and plans to cut costs will be created.
4. Annual budgets of auxiliary functions will be examined and internal resource gaps/ drains analyzed.

Year Two: 2010–2011

Action Items

1. Implement new membership fee structure.
2. Examine the possibility of college fairs in other cities.
 - a. Board members from various states will work to create relations with counselors and colleges in the area where we hope to create a new fair.
3. Diversify organization's income streams.
 - a. Consider workshops as additional revenue.
 - b. Examine the potential relationships between vendors and RMACAC for membership, sponsorships, and conference presenters.
 - c. Increase vendor participation at spring conference and college fairs.
4. Research foundations/organizations that reside in RMACAC states that may be willing to give grants to RMACAC for specific projects and initiatives.

Measures

1. New fee structure will be implemented.
2. Vendor attendance at college fairs will increase.
3. Vendor attendance at spring conference will grow from 5–6 to 10.
4. List of college fair ideas will be presented to board.
5. Identification of possible funding foundations will be created and prioritized.

Year Three: 2011–2012

Action Items

1. Implement new college fairs.
2. College fair and spring conference committees will continue to work to build relationships with vendors and service students in the college transition and their counselors.
3. Treasurer, along with board, will work on financial modeling and planning.
4. Create a development committee with fundraising expertise to write and solicit grants.

Measures

1. One to two new college fairs will be successful at raising awareness, supporting students, and bringing in new revenue.
2. Vendor attendance at college fairs and spring conference will continue to grow.
3. New avenues for financial stabilization will continue to be analyzed by the treasurer/s and brought to the board for examination.
5. Financial plan for next three years will be created.
6. Development Committee created with three members and at least two additional grant proposals submitted.

Strategic Goal 5:

Analyze membership trends, improve value and increase grow membership in each state.

Year One: 2009–2010

Action Items

1. Membership chair will ask for committee representation from the five-state region and will work as a team with one RMACAC delegate.
2. Conduct an analysis of membership trends over the past three years.
3. Add a new question to the college fair registration form, asking if participant is a new member. Responses flow into Excel spreadsheet.
4. Create a timeline for membership renewal and follow up with non-responders. This effort will be coordinated with college fair registration.
5. Board members will share the duty of calling NACAC members from our region who are not RMACAC members asking them to join (about 100 people).
6. Explore the idea of membership levels.

Measures

1. Membership chair will gain a delegate co-worker and will have a committee of volunteers made up from the five states.
2. An analysis of membership trends will be completed and goals for growth will be made to the board.
3. Registration forms will be updated.
4. Follow up to members who didn't renew will be completed and calls will be made to all NACAC members who live in our region and are not RMACAC members.

Year Two: 2010–2011

Action Items

1. Membership chair utilizes the multi-state membership group to create a list of counselors in each state and send out invitations for membership.
2. Use NACAC membership as a resource.
 - a. Send an invitation to the NACAC listserv inviting membership.
 - b. Send a membership invitation to all of the five state NACAC attendees who are not currently RMACAC members.
 - c. Research their 2:1 matching membership program.
3. Follow-up when members do not renew.
4. Create new member packets and send to all new to RMACAC members.
5. Update the RMACAC calendar with events that would benefit membership and friends.

Measures

1. Membership portion of website will be continually updated.
2. A database with counselor and college admissions staff from the five-state area will have been created.
3. Relations with NACAC membership committee will be made and a proposal for the implementation of the 2:1 program will be presented to the board.
4. New member packet will be created and will be circulated on a regular basis.

Year Three: 2011–2012

Action Items

1. Membership chair utilizes the multi-state membership group to update the list of counselors in each state and will send out invitations for membership.
 - a. Special attention will be placed on community-based organizations, out-of-state colleges and outside organizations.
 - b. Special attention will be placed on independent counselors
2. Update RMACAC calendar with events that would benefit membership and friends.
3. Act on one-two ideas presented to increase membership (board).
4. Implement the 2:1 NACAC program.

Measures

1. Membership will have grown 3 to 5%.
2. An effective membership committee will be active in each state.
3. New avenues for growing membership will be in place including the 2:1 program.

Strategic Goal 6:

Increase member involvement in RMACAC/NACAC by working with partner organizations to build broad public support for higher education in all states in the region and prepare our members to become "go-to" constituents for state and national legislators regarding high school to postsecondary transition issues.

Year One: 2009–2010

Action Items

1. Identify partner organizations and contact counterparts in those organizations.
2. Hold "Day at the Capitol" events in two states, including Colorado.
3. Increase membership on government relations committee.

Measures

1. Government relations committee will have two new members from states where "Day at the Capitol" events are to be held.
2. Government relations chair will have a list of like-minded and supportive organizations and contacts with which to work for each of the five states.
3. Colorado and one other state will host a "Day at the Capitol" event.

Year Two: 2010–2011

Action Items

1. Increase government relations committee to represent all states where “Day at the Capitol” events will be held in 2010–2011.
2. Explore partnership opportunities in the three states not holding “Day at the Capitol” events.
3. Research ways to provide state legislative updates using NACAC resources and those in place in RMACAC states.
4. Increase information available to members on the website.

Measures

1. Committee membership will grow to include members from three of the five states.
2. RMACAC will hold “Day at the Capitol” events in Colorado and one other state.
3. RMACAC will identify and begin to work with partner organizations in third state for “Day at the Capitol” event for 2011–2012 year.
4. Legislative update plan will be presented to RMACAC Board at fall board meeting.
5. Website content will be updated at least twice during year.

Year Three: 2011–2012

Action Items

1. Grow committee membership to include one member from each state and try to nominate a member to the national committee.
2. Hold “Day at the Capitol” events in three states.
3. Implement legislative update plan.

Measures

1. RMACAC will be part of the legislative dialogue of partner organizations.
2. RMACAC Board and government relations chair will qualitatively and quantitatively report substantial forward progress.
 - a. Attendance will increase at “Day at the Capitol” events.
 - b. Contact with partner organizations on legislative issues will increase.
 - c. RMACAC members will express satisfaction with the action days and alert system.
3. “Day at the Capitol” events will be established in three states with plans substantially complete for the inclusion of all states in the next two years.
4. Committee will have one member from each state.