



# The Professionalization of Agency-Based Recruitment

Association of International Education Administrators  
Annual Conference  
Washington, DC  
16 February 2010

Mitch Leventhal, AIRC Chair and President  
Marjorie Peace Lenn, AIRC Director of Certification  
Norman Peterson, AIRC Board Member  
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**American International Recruitment Council (AIRC)**

c/o State University of New York • 116 East 55<sup>th</sup> Street • New York, NY 10022 • Tel. +1 240 516 8470 • [info@airc-education.org](mailto:info@airc-education.org)



## ***Historically, Limited Use of Agents in the USA***

***This stands in stark contrast with Australia, New Zealand and the UK,  
where virtually all universities engage agents.***

*Until very recently, virtually no major US research universities or competitive private liberal arts colleges were willing to engage agents directly.*

***Poor practice on the part of a few institutions has led to extreme hostility  
to the practice among many US educational leaders.***

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## ***Americans Refusal to Engage Agents Has Exacerbated a Bad Situation***

Anecdotally, many students – as many as 50% of Chinese undergraduates – arrive to US institutions through the use of agents whom the students themselves paid, often at *extortionate rates*.

Student payments to agents of US \$5,000 or more are not unheard of.

These *agents do not necessarily have specific expertise in US education* and are operating in a totally unregulated space.

Desperate students and parents are vulnerable to *unscrupulous practices*.

***American educational institutions exacerbated a bad situation by not engaging agents and pro-actively professionalizing practice.***

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## ***Americans Have Been Slow Learners***

*American admissions officers have generally rejected the use of commission-based agents – despite their proven effectiveness elsewhere*

Why? The reasons given vary, but most boil down to these three:

***“It’s illegal.*** Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits paying commissions to recruiters.”

***“It’s Prohibited*** by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC).”

***“It’s unethical.*** Agents do not work in the interest of the students.”

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# ***Not Illegal – Not Prohibited***

## **Title IV of the HEA *Explicitly Permits* Commission-based Recruitment of Foreign Students**

The “small print” from Title IV:

(b) By entering into a program participation agreement, an institution agrees that –

(22)(i) It will not provide any commission, bonus, or other incentive payment based directly or indirectly upon success in securing enrollments or financial aid to any person or entity engaged in any student recruiting or admission activities or in making decisions regarding the awarding of title IV, HEA program funds, except that ***this limitation does not apply to the recruitment of foreign students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive title IV, HEA program funds.***

## **NACAC’s Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP), which prohibits commission payments, *Does Not Apply to Recruitment of Foreign Students***

NACAC’s Director of Public Policy states “*our SPGP does not directly address commission payments for recruiters of foreign students. Part of that limitation is due to the fact that federal law, which bans ‘commissioned sales in admission’ domestically, specifically exempts recruiters of foreign students.*”

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## ***Agents Are Not Necessarily Unethical***

There is a long-standing tradition in business of using *trusted intermediaries* (agents and brokers) to facilitate business.

The US Commercial Service endorses the use of agents to facilitate many aspects of international trade.

*Universities already utilize agents in many ways:*

- **Headhunters** assist with presidential, provostal and decanal searches
- **Stock brokers** manage university endowments
- **Real estate agents** assist with sale and purchase of property holdings
- **Insurance brokers** assist university risk managers

***These agents are not ethically suspect because their professional practice standards are well-established and familiar, and are supported by trusted regulatory frameworks.***

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## ***Standards Have Emerged***

Professional practice standards, widely adopted within an industry, drive ethical practice.

A highly developed regulatory framework exists for Australian universities, and it has been hugely influential on the emerging practices of other countries. The framework is focused on ethical practices and consumer protection, and is comprised of the following:

- Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS)
- The National Code
- The Australian Vice Chancellor's Committee (AVCC) Code of Practice
- And related sectoral Codes and Standards

***Other countries have watched closely and developed approaches and standards closely modeled on Australian practice.***

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## ***AIRC Established to Create an Enforceable Standards Regime***

- May 2008 – Decision to create AIRC made at NAFSA Washington

***Vision was to create industry-based standards and a certification process closely modeled on best practices in US higher education quality assurance and accreditation.***

June 2008 – Incorporated as a non-profit in Washington, DC

- September 2008 – 1<sup>st</sup> Standards Meeting in Bangkok (attended by agents EduGlobal, Global Reach, Mentor and representatives from University of Cincinnati, Ohio University and Lorain County Community College).
- October 2008 – 2<sup>st</sup> Standards Meeting in Cincinnati (attended by about 25 representatives from member institutions).

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## ***Establishment Timeline, con't***

- February 2009 – Registered as *Standards Development Organization* (SDO) with the US Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission
- May 26, 2009 – Standards Adopted by AIRC Membership
- June 1, 2009 – Pilot Certification Launched
- December 4-5, 2009 – 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference - First eight of Certified Agencies Announced
- December 6, 2009 – Regular Certification Processes Start
- May, 2010-Certification Board Meets for Second Review
- Early 2011 – 25 to 35 Certified Agencies / 125 Institutions (projected)

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# AIRC Certified Agents: Certified through December 31, 2012

As of February 12, 2010



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# AIRC Candidates

As of February 12, 2010



CANAM GROUP



studying overseas is *easier* with us



the gyan foundation  
Empowering Aspirations



Raj Consultants



KANGAROO STUDIES  
PVT. LTD.



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# ***AIRC Applicants***

*As of February 12, 2010*



***IndoPacific Education Services***

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## *Benefits of Institutional Membership*

1. Participate in Standards Development and Implementation
2. Join a Community of Institutions and Agencies concerned with the Professionalization of International Student Recruitment and Placement
3. Training and Professional Development Activities

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# ***Institutional Membership***

*(as of February 12, 2010)*

*Voting membership is open to any US-accredited post-secondary educational institution, public or private, non-profit or for-profit.*

Membership fee is US \$500 (under 10,000 students) and  
US \$1,000 (10,000 or more students)

## Characteristics of membership...

All Degree Levels Represented

Community Colleges

Proprietary Institutions

Intensive English Institutes

Graduate Institutions

Research Extensive / Research Intensive

**86 Institutions**

27 States Represented

Public & Private

Secular & Religiously affiliated

Urban, Suburban and Rural

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# *Institutional Membership*

*(as of February 12, 2010)*



American International University  
Arkansas State University – Jonesboro  
Ashland University  
Beauty School of America  
Bellarmine University  
Berkeley College  
Brescia University  
Boise State University  
California Lutheran University  
Cascadia Community College  
Cleveland State University  
Colorado State University  
Daemen College  
Drexel University  
Duquesne University  
Eastern Illinois University  
ELS Language Centers  
Franklin University  
Foothill-De Anza Community College  
Georgia Southern University  
Golden Gate University  
Green River Community College  
Grand Valley State University  
Hendrix College  
Jacksonville State University  
Keck Graduate Institute of Applied  
Life Sciences – Claremont Colleges  
Kent State University  
Kutztown University  
Lewis University

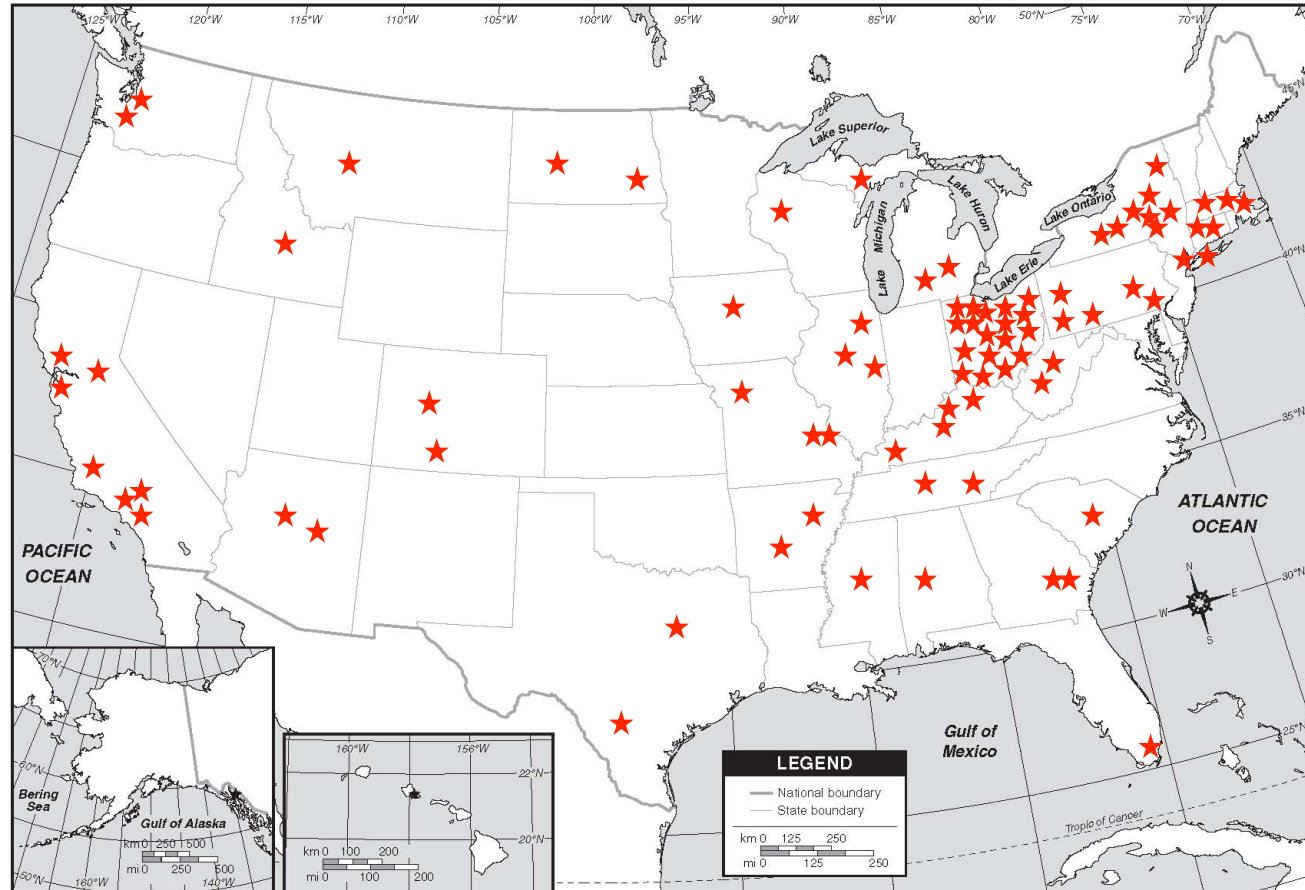
Lorain County Community College  
Marshall University  
Middle Tennessee State University  
Montana State University  
Monterrey Institute of International Studies  
Murray State University  
North Dakota State University  
Northern Arizona University  
Northern Kentucky University  
Northern Michigan University  
Northwest Missouri State University  
Oglethorpe University  
Ohio Dominican University  
Ohio University  
Ohio Wesleyan University  
Ohlone College  
Otterbein College  
Prairie View A&M University  
Saint Louis University  
St. Francis University  
St. Norbert College  
Shawnee State University  
SUNY - State University of New York –  
System Administration  
SUNY Brockport  
SUNY College at Old Westbury  
SUNY Geneseo  
SUNY Oneonta  
SUNY Oswego  
SUNY Plattsburgh  
SUNY Stony Brook University

Suffolk University  
Syracuse University  
Tiffin University  
University of Akron  
University of Bridgeport  
University of Cincinnati  
University of Colorado – Denver  
University of Findlay  
University of Hartford  
University of Illinois – Springfield  
University of Mississippi  
University of Missouri – St. Louis  
University of North Dakota  
University of South Carolina  
University of Texas at San Antonio  
University of Tennessee – Knoxville  
University of the Pacific  
University of Toledo  
Upper Iowa University  
Urbana University  
Waynesburg University  
West Virginia University  
Western International University  
Western Michigan University  
Western New England College  
Wittenberg University  
Wright State University



# A National Quality Assurance Movement

(as of February 12, 2010)



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# *AIRC Certification Process*

## 1. External Due Diligence by World-Check ( [www.world-check.com](http://www.world-check.com) )

Focus on patterns of criminal misconduct and ethical malpractice by company and beneficial shareholders.

## 2. Professional Development

Utilization of AIRC prescribed materials with heavy focus on knowledge of US higher education, visa and labor regulations, admission practice, etc.

## 3. Self Evaluation by Agency

Non-prescriptive, with a focus on reflection, best practice and continuous improvement.

## 4. External Review by Representative from Member Institution

External reviewers are ineligible if their home institution has an existing relationship with the agency.

## 5. Decision by Certification Board

Certification Board appointed by Board of Directors but wholly independent of it.

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# *AIRC Certification Standards – Major Categories*

1. Organizational Effectiveness
2. Integrity of Recruitment Process
3. Student & Family Engagement Pre and Post –Enrollment
4. Institutional Engagement Pre and Post-Enrollment
5. Complaints Process

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## ***Under Development***

Shared Member Resources

Member Directory

Market Intelligence

Training for Institutions and Agents

Enhanced Web Presence

Annual Conference

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*Thank You!*



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