

CĂTĂLINA GĂRDESCU

EDUCATIONAL MARKETING & INCLUSION CONSULTANT
FOUNDER, IDEAS INTO ACTION SRL

About Me

Wholehearted and empathetic lifelong learner.

25 years of experience in international schools leading admissions, marketing & communications.

I bring strategy, creativity, and compassion together to help schools align people, practices, and purpose.



"You can choose courage or you can choose comfort, but you cannot choose both."
Dr. Brené Brown

A photograph showing three people in a meeting. On the left, a woman with long dark hair is looking towards the center. In the middle, a woman with long blonde hair is smiling and looking towards the right. On the right, a man with a beard and a dark cap is gesturing with his hands while speaking. They are standing in front of a whiteboard that has several papers and diagrams pinned to it, including one with the text "SABLE FLOW".

How I Can Help

Every project follows a clear cycle of reflection, collaboration, implementation, and evaluation.

Strategic Communications & Branding

Clarify your story, align your messages, and build community trust.

Admissions & Marketing Systems

Design seamless, values-driven admissions experiences that reflect your school's identity.

Inclusive Professional Development

Empower every staff member — from classroom to campus — to support belonging and inclusion.

Facilitation & Professional Learning Design

Engage teams in reflective, purposeful dialogue that turns ideas into action.



My Approach



- **Listen** – Understand your story, culture, and needs.
- **Design** – Shape tailored, practical frameworks.
- **Implement** – Facilitate growth, reflection, and lasting change.
- **Assess** – Measure impact through feedback, data, and lived experience to refine and sustain progress.

Realistic plans. Inclusive processes. Measurable and sustainable results.

FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

BUILDING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Pioneering global collaboration and professional growth in international school admissions.

PROFESSIONALISING THE FIELD OF ADMISSIONS

Creating the first certificate course to define essential knowledge and skills for admissions professionals.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

Designing communication strategies that inspire engagement, generosity, and school pride.

ADVANCING INCLUSION AND TRANSITIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Amplifying voices and visibility to strengthen belonging across international education.



BUILDING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A decade of leadership connecting and elevating international school admissions professionals.

The Problem

In the early 2000s, admissions professionals in international schools worked in isolation.

There were no established networks, structured training opportunities, or recognition of admissions as a professional field.



The Solution

Initiated and led the creation of a vibrant professional community for international school admissions:

2005: Co-founded a network of over 400 professionals who met regularly to exchange ideas and collaborate.

2012–2015: Established and chaired the ECIS Admissions Committee, developing conference sessions in Istanbul, Berlin, and Seville.

Designed budgets and laid the groundwork for the first admissions certification program in Europe.

2018: Co-led “Learning and the Storytellers,” one of the most successful admissions conferences in the region.

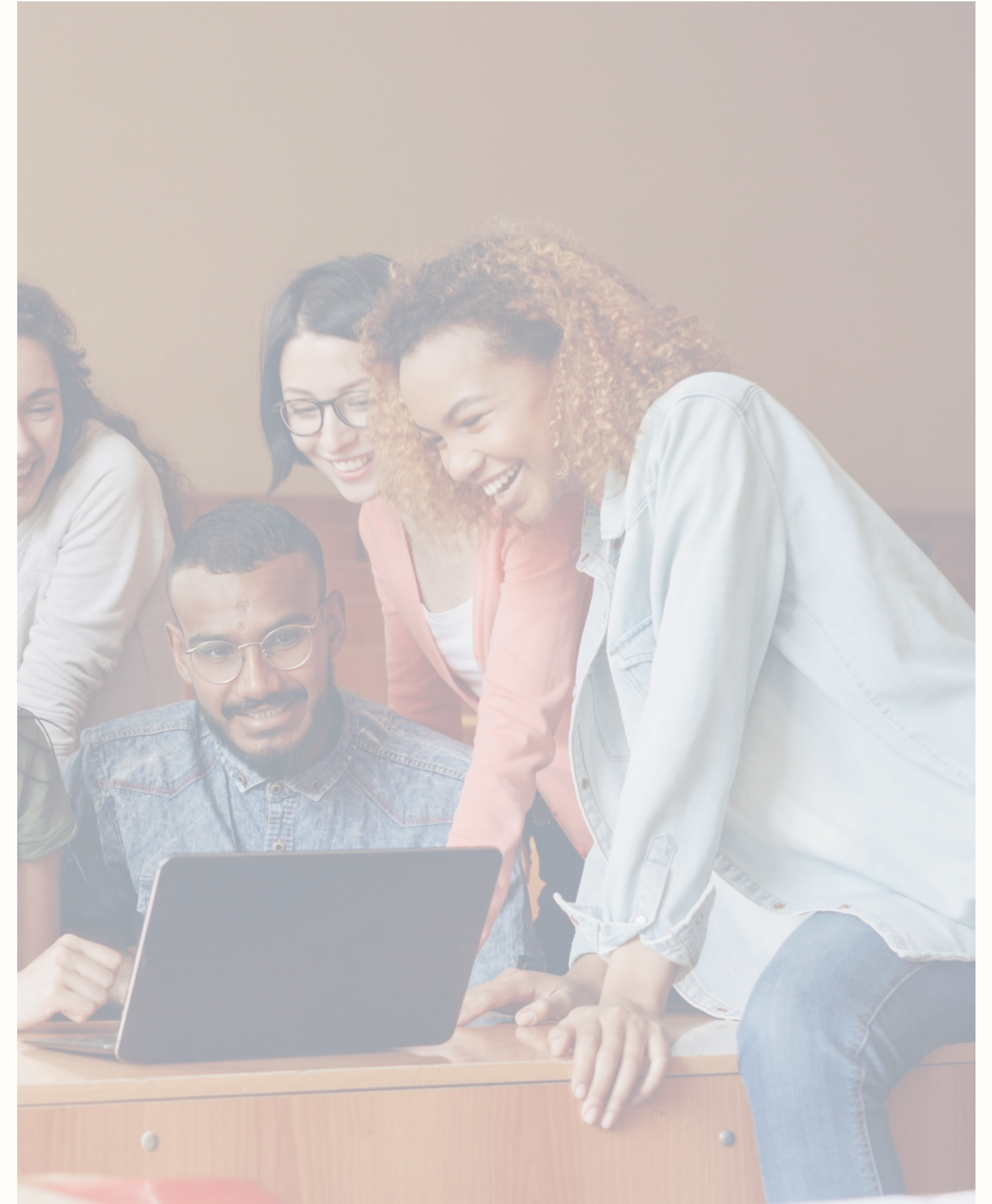
The Impact

Created the foundation for **a recognized global admissions community.**

Inspired **continuing professional development** and certification efforts that are still active today.

Strengthened **collaboration** between schools and professional bodies (ECIS, OpenApply).

Gave **visibility and legitimacy** to a profession previously overlooked within school leadership structures.



PROFESSIONALISING THE FIELD OF ADMISSIONS

Designing and Leading the *“Fundamentals of International School Admissions”* Certificate Course (2016–2017)

The Problem

At the time, admissions professionals had few structured learning opportunities and little guidance on what knowledge and skills were essential for success in their roles.





The Solution

I designed and facilitated the “*Fundamentals of International School Admissions*” certificate course — the first structured professional learning program dedicated to this field.

Delivered in Shanghai, Singapore, and Sofia, the program:

- Provided a comprehensive foundation in ethics, communication, data analysis, and intercultural competence.
- Used case studies and real-school simulations to connect theory to daily practice.
- Created a network of practitioners who continued to exchange ideas long after the course ended.

The Impact

Supported the **professionalisation** of international school admissions as a recognized discipline.

Equipped participants with **practical, ethical, and strategic tools** for their roles.

Strengthened **collaboration** among schools in Asia and Europe around admissions excellence.

Inspired follow-up **courses and workshops** that continue to shape how schools approach admissions today.



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

Leading large-scale communication and fundraising initiatives that turned school milestones into shared community success.

The Problem

Schools often struggle to connect strategic communication with authentic community engagement — making it difficult to mobilize support, raise funds, and celebrate milestones in meaningful ways.



The Solution

Designed and led integrated marketing, communication, and event strategies that built trust and inspired giving across the school community.

Key initiatives included:

- **Dedication of a new international school campus** – a milestone event welcoming 1,500 guests.
- **50 Years celebration of an international school** – a year-long celebration culminating in a 500-guest gala.
- **Capital Campaign for a Design & Engineering Center** – goal €500,000, total raised over €700,000.
- **Annual Auction Galas** supporting scholarships and educational grants.



The Impact

Strengthened the **school's reputation** as a visionary, community-centered international school.

Surpassed **fundraising targets** through authentic engagement and transparent communication.

Deepened alumni, parent, and partner **relationships** through storytelling and shared purpose.

Set a **new benchmark** for how schools can align mission-driven communication with measurable outcomes.



ADVANCING INCLUSION AND TRANSITIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Combining professional and volunteer communications roles to advance inclusion, transitions, and visibility across schools.

The Problem

Inclusion, operational staff development, and transitions care are often underrepresented in international schools' professional discourse.

Many valuable initiatives struggle to gain visibility, recognition, and long-term impact due to limited communication capacity and fragmented advocacy.



The Solution

I have dedicated my recent professional and volunteer work to amplifying inclusion-focused initiatives and helping schools recognize the value of every role in their communities:

- **Safe Passage Across Networks (SPAN)** — Director of Communications, strengthening visibility, storytelling, and global reach to support healthy transitions.
- **Parents Alliance for Inclusion (PAI)** — Volunteer communications support, increasing the visibility of parent advocates and educators.
- **No Staff Left Behind Project** — Currently developing an inclusion and professional development framework for operational staff.
- **Writing & Advocacy** — Regularly publish and present on inclusion, operational staff empowerment, and compassionate transitions in international education.

Through this work, I help initiatives build presence, partnerships, and momentum so their impact reaches further.



The Impact

Elevated **awareness of inclusion and transitions** as whole-school priorities, not isolated functions.

Strengthened **communication and collaboration** across educators, parents, and school leaders.

Supported organizations and communities that build **belonging through story, voice, and visibility**.

Positioned **communication as a strategic tool** for cultural change and inclusive growth in schools.



Reach & Recognition

Experience & Reach

25 years in international education (AIS Bucharest, Copenhagen International School)
 Founding Partner — Ideas Into Action SRL
 Presenter & facilitator for ECIS, CEESA, ISS, SPAN, IABC
 Contributor to International Admissions Bulletin and InterED

Visible Impact

Created PD pathways for admissions and operations teams
 Built long-term partnerships with schools worldwide
 Delivered workshops on inclusion and community engagement



What People Say:

"I cannot think of a better person to support schools in this work. Your experience in admissions and marketing, as a transitions-care leader, inclusion champion, and mentor to so many in this field will be such a benefit to any admissions team, no matter how experienced they are."

Julia Love, International School Enrollment Leader

"Your ability to bring in the parent perspective in the admissions process is so powerful."

April Remfrey, International Inclusion Consultant

"Over the 25 years we've collaborated in different roles and across two international schools, I've seen you lead big, complex initiatives and somehow make them feel calm, clear, and collaborative."

Mario Zamfir, Founder Aliant Brands

*"For the last 10 years I've been so impressed how you've supported the international admissions community from pioneering an admissions magazine to creating a professional development course to regularly sharing your expertise at events on a multitude of topics."*¹⁹

MacKenzie Murray, COO Faria Education Group

LET'S WORK TOGETHER



If your school is ready to grow through authentic communication, inclusive leadership, and purposeful strategy, let's start a conversation.

Together, we can build communities where every voice contributes to lasting impact.

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