

Name: **Katie Maher**

Title, Institution & Role: **At the time of the conference, I was a Career Coach at Radford University. Currently I am the Assistant Director of Career Services at VMI.**

Membership registration or conference attended: Name, date, where and when: **I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship to attend the NACE conference in Orlando Florida.**

Provide a brief overview of that membership or conference opportunity and why you selected it – this should be a summary/story of need – why is this opportunity critical to your current work and career goals to advance work-based learning opportunities for students? **NACE is the national conference for career services so the opportunity to attend such a prestigious conference was one that caught my attention. The opportunity to learn best practices from professionals working in career services across the United States is something that I knew would allow me to grow within my role at the time. The state of Virginia is placing a goal to increase work-based learning and being able to see how other institutions are making this possible was something of great interest to me.**

Share the story of the value that this scholarship added to your professional work. What did you learn from the professional development opportunity and how does it relate to advancing work-based learning for students? Be specific. Every type of conference or membership offers opportunities for networking and learning best practices, new resources. What sets this opportunity (conference or membership) apart? What did you learn that will help you advance work-based learning opportunities for students? **Without the support of this scholarship, I would not have been fortunate enough to attend the conference last year. I was able to network, attend multiple informational sessions and be introduced to a wide range of vendors offering career service-related products.**

One session that stood out to me was about ensuring the development and positive outcomes of every work-based learning opportunity students undertake while in college. From this session I implemented a review of the NACE competencies at the beginning and end of all student workers within our office. In doing this it allows for both us as staff but also the student to truly see where they are at and intentionally ensure that the work they are doing is having a positive long-term impact on their future careers.

How do you plan on using what you learned in your day-to-day responsibilities and current role? **Being able to grow my professional network of fellow career services personnel has allowed me to gain people to bounce ideas back and forth with and remain informed on best practices as they are happening at other schools within the state and nationally. One key piece of information that I also learned at the conference was to remain cognizant that we are here to give the students the tools for success, not to do it for them. As a new working professional, I believe this is a key piece of information and something that I need to ensure I am maintaining throughout my day-to-day work.**

How will this opportunity benefit the students you work with? **I believe the opportunity allowed me to grow and to better understand the needs of our current students in the world of higher education. COVID has changed many aspects of the job and being able to be flexible and meet the students where they are is something that I will now continue to be conscious of and incorporate into my work with students.**

At the conference I also attended a session that talked about rolling out a faculty champion program to enhance support of career services on campus from faculty. This session motivated a colleague and me to develop a proposal for a similar program to be rolled out across the Radford campus. The program focused on recognizing faculty that are making an effort to work with the career and talent development office. They would be given recognition in the form of featuring on the website, receiving a certificate to display in their office and receiving regular updates from the office. Having a program such as this would allow for the much-needed recognition of faculty that are actively looking for ways to assist students with their future career goals. This in turn will have a long-term benefit on students as they will see that not only staff in career services but also their faculty members are invested in their journey.

NACE also allowed for the exposure to many different career platforms that can only enhance our offices offerings so getting to become connected with so many vendors within the career services world will also in the long run benefit our students as we will be able to have more resources to better develop them moving forward.

What else would you like to share about the conference/membership experience? I would just like to thank V-TOP for the opportunity to attend such an event as without the support of this scholarship I wouldn't have been able to have this opportunity. The conference was a great opportunity to learn and grow as a professional and allowed for many new ideas and best practices to be implemented into my daily role within career services. Thank you again!