

NACADA Graduate Student Scholarship Testimonial

As a graduate student, becoming a member of NACADA was one of the best decisions I could have made towards my professional development. From connecting to professionals in the field to offering me opportunities to present at two regional conferences, my membership has rewarded me in more ways than I can count. Receiving a Graduate Student Regional Conference Scholarship from the Association not only supported my professional aspirations, but further demonstrated to me that NACADA is committed to supporting its members, even at the student level.

Going into graduate school, I was hired for an assistantship with little to no advising responsibilities, even though advising was one of my major reasons for seeking further education. Through various internship experiences I was able to explore my advising interests but I knew that getting involved in an organization aimed at supporting and developing the profession would help me determine whether or not advising was the best fit for me. I made it a goal to present at the first regional conference, and with the help of my supervisor and an advising colleague, I was able to accomplish that goal. In the April of 2016, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, I fell in love with NACADA.

Before the Region III conference in 2016, I had attended two student affairs conferences and found that while I learned a lot from both, I was missing the lessons that a conference focused on advising and student academic success could teach me. After being surrounded by people who were passionate about the same thing I was, I was hooked.

In the Fall of 2017, I used the majority of my professional development funds and my own personal funds to attend the Annual Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. There I was able to reconnect with people I met in Chattanooga and regain some the same enthusiasm I had for advising when I left the Regional conference. When the conference concluded, I felt more assured in my decision to pursue Academic Advising as a profession and went into the job search season with determination to find the advising position for me.

Feeling inspired from many of the presentations I saw while in Atlanta and driven to further develop my presentation skills, I connected with a close colleague to create a presentation. At this point, I had little to no professional development funds and little that I could personally put forth, especially with job search in full swing. Feeling a bit defeated and frustrated that my goal of presenting again would be stunted due to lack of financial support, I received an email from NACADA about conference scholarships.

I admit now that I was extremely skeptical that I would receive a scholarship. I honestly did not feel that I did much to warrant such a generous gift and did not feel that my chances were very high at all. My professor and colleagues, on the other hand, saw the potential in me and knew how much passion I had for advising as well as for NACADA. They saw how much I lit up when I talked about my presentation ideas and how much I enjoyed talking about how much the conferences meant to me. While my mentors pushed me to reach my fullest potential, NACADA supported me in the process of exploring my dream profession and ultimately finding my fit. I am forever thankful for the opportunities NACADA has provided me and appreciate the ones who believed in me to receive the gift of a Graduate Student Regional Conference Scholarship.