Conference Reflections: NAADAC

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*Editor’s note: Student activity fees at Metropolitan State University are allocated by the Student Activity Fee Allocation Committee (SAFAC). Through SAFAC, recognized student groups can use student activity fees to fund student organization operations and attend conferences. As a condition for receiving funds for conferences, students are asked to write about what they have learned for The Metropolitan. This is the reflections of two students who attended a conference.*

Cooper:

My name is Abby Cooper and I am one of the fortunate students able to attend the annual National Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC) conference. NAADAC is the National Association for Addiction Professionals. NAADAC used to stand for “National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors”, but fortunately the association made some changes to include all addiction professionals.

NAADAC claims to represent more than 85,000 addiction professionals. NAADAC and its state affiliates “work to create healthier individuals, families and communities through prevention, intervention, quality treatment and recovery support.” NAADAC offers education, conferences, advocacy, workplace development and resources for its members. Members can network and obtain continuing education credits to maintain their licensure and attend conferences.

I am a member of the Metro State Alcohol and Drug Counseling Student Association. First I want to say “thank you” to SAFAC and Metro State for allowing me this opportunity. Not only was I afforded wonderful hotel accommodations, meals, and a conference with great speaker presentations; I also was able to meet and network with many professionals from across the United States. I feel as though the most memorable event was the awards luncheon. This was most impactful for me watching people who have been in the field for decades graciously accept their well-deserved awards and encourage the future counselors and other addiction professionals. I also enjoyed the trip because I was able to get to know three of my fellow students very well! We had a blast, many laughs. I have no doubt Shannon, David and Maurice are the exact people the award winners were encouraging to make a difference in this field.

Starks:

In attending NAADAC, I did in fact get a broader understanding of the field. But what was most important for me, was the better understanding I got of the people in the field that make a significant difference in the lives of clients. Although my experience during NAADAC mirrors every aspect that Abby has mentioned, I want to speak to the intangibles of the trip – the valuable experience away from the conference.

Make no mistake, the primary goal of addiction consolers is to be able to treat clients effectively. During my time as a student, whether through coursework, advocacy, attending conferences, or other experiences, I’ve learned to identify one common trait that successful providers share in effectively treating clients; empathy: “the psychological identification with or vicarious experience of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another” or the “ability to understand and share the feelings of another”.

Regardless of whose definition I choose to use, empathy is the key ingredient in the treatment process. And as we navigated through D.C. on our trip attending a conference about addiction, observing homelessness in a form more intense than what I’m used to here in Minnesota, discussing history at the Washington monument with tour guides, and all the experiences that reveal a person’s ability to “understand and share the feelings of another,” the magnitude of this trip’s educational component exceeded any and all expectations.