

# INNERVIEW

Spring 2023 Newsletter

## VACE CONFERENCE: A LOOK BACK



VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION  
OF COLLEGES & EMPLOYERS



# CONFERENCE RECAP

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Wow. Another conference has come and gone.

But what a wonderful experience it was to see career services personnel and employers engage in professional interaction. As I stood at the podium looking over the close to one hundred new friends and previous acquaintances, I was excited by the high energy I felt and the great conversations I heard emanating from the crowd. I knew it was going to be a great conference from the very start.

The goal of the VACE Conference is to bring our members together to share what is happening in our industries when it comes to partnering great students and graduates with great internships and jobs. We expand our understanding of the challenges and successes from both sides of the employment fence. For example, I am excited yet cautious regarding advancement in A.I. that innovates yet tasks creative process, accountability, and authenticity. I am also excited about opportunities using resources like LinkedIn but acknowledge the learning curve our students must be willing to navigate to be viable as candidates for employment. I am thankful for an organization that brings career services and employers together so that we can successfully jump these hurdles together.

There were so many memorable moments, but what impacted me most was the Newcomers Activity and Lunch. I enjoyed watching our 34 Newcomers get to know each other through shared experiences, and then sit down for lunch with our board and conference committee to learn more about VACE and how they can get involved. I was at a table with some great folks from Fastenal, JMU, and ODU, and I watched them connect for job and internship opportunities, exchanging cards for later interactions – all in the first hour of the conference!

Wintergreen provided a beautiful landscape in which to journey. I want to especially thank the staff that looked out for us during our sessions and compliment the dining crew on their delicious cuisine including huge home-baked cookies and ice cream with all the trimmings!

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I hope you enjoyed the President's Reception that offered delicious Hors d'oeuvres and a chance to mingle on a beautiful spring night. The Awards Banquet and Ceremony celebrated the great things our members are contributing to our industries. And a special congratulations to Donna Ratcliffe who is retiring after 38 years of service to career development including President of VACE. On behalf of VACE, I want to express our sincerest gratitude.

I want to thank our speakers and presenters who shared their expertise, experiences and best practices. The presentation evaluations tell the story of the value in knowledge and renewal of purpose that we take away.

For me, the highlight of the seventeen VACE conferences I have attended has been the comradery and the openness of our members who are willing to share their triumphs and challenges from which we all benefit as we strive to help students successfully move into the careers of their dreams.

Thank you, VACE leadership under the stewardship of Amanda Grantham, and thank you Conference Committee for your dedication to making VACE 2023 an event to remember! All the best to Jennifer Dobrzynski and Alice Jones as they work toward VACE 2024.

My hope is that if you attended the conference, as a result you will:

- Join a committee and get involved – we rely on our corps of talented volunteers!
- Engage in VACE activities throughout the year!
- Reach out to the people you met at VACE 2023!
- Make your mark with VACE!
- Join us next year at Hotel Roanoke for VACE 2024!

Your College Chair,

Sherry Talbott  
VACE 2023  
Bridgewater College

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# VACE AWARD WINNERS

- A. Isabel Gordon Distinguished Service - Philip Wilkerson (George Mason University)
- John L. Chase Meritorious Service - Peggy Reed (University of Virginia)
- New Professional - Cody Smith (Virginia Tech) and Janae Driver (University of Richmond)
- Emerging Leader - Maegan Crews-Fallen (Randolph College)
- Patricia J. Carretta Special Achievement - Bev Reid (University of Lynchburg)
- Celebration of Retirement - Dr. Donna Cassell Ratcliffe (Virginia Tech)
- Honorary Lifetime Membership - Dr. Donna Cassell Ratcliffe (Virginia Tech)
- Spirit Cup Award - Laura Yu Hickerson & her JMU Employer Relations Colleagues (James Madison University)

## Spirit Cup Award Winners



  
**ROCS College Recruiting Webinar**  
The University of Virginia and Virginia Tech Career Services Leaders Advice for Recent College Graduates and Companies Recruiting Them



**Stuart Mease**  
ROCS Grad Staffing  
Director of North Carolina  
Operations and Webinar  
Host



**Jennifer Tortora**  
Director of Career  
Services and Employer  
Relations in the Pamplin  
College of Business at  
Virginia Tech



**Nicole Hall**  
Associate VP for Career  
Development at the  
University of Virginia

REGISTER NOW  
Thursday, May 18th @1PM EST

**Click on the image to the left for a link to register for this webinar. This is not a VACE-sponsored seminar but we thought it might be of interest to our members.**

# VACE CONFERENCE 2024

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**HOTEL ROANOKE**  
**Roanoke, Virginia**  
**April 24-26, 2024**

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Have a  
great  
summer!

