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Conference Scholarship Follow-up Essay
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Participating in the American Cheese Society's 30th Anniversary Conference was a memorable experience for learning and celebrating everything surrounding cheese. From taking the Certified Cheese Professional™ Exam to the many workshops, tastings, and sessions offered. I understand the importance of the society; ACS represents such a key component to our industry. I appreciate the opportunity provided as a scholarship recipient to experience what that offers, first hand.

To me, the ACS is a community of individual enthusiasts, farmers, cheesemakers, cheesemongers, and others who come together to share ideas and celebrate the love of cheese. As a cheesemonger in Minneapolis, it is not every day that you meet those that have chosen the same path as yourself. It was a great feeling to meet so many people who have the passion and love that I share. There were many opportunities to cultivate relationships with others participants, some as far as across the world, others in our own backyard. Seeing old friends and making new friends, the conference provided a unique look inside our cheese world.

Attending the conference and all it had to offer (including the exam) solidified what I have felt for some time. Cheese is a legitimate career, one that I enjoy every day. It elevated what we all do daily. There was a respect for each other and what we have chosen for a living. It was both exciting and invigorating to share the experience with those who love cheese as much as I do, and strive to be better at what they do.

Education is a number one goal for ACS. The ACS provided several educational sessions that I attended during the week in beautiful Madison, WI. I loved hearing from the international cheesemongers, representing England, Australia, and France. It was fascinating to hear their perspective on cheese retail within their communities, and how to use that information for our own shops and customers' experiences. Each session I attended shed new views and ideas on subjects we face each day. Covering everything from cut & wrap vs. cut to order, developing effective conversations between makers, retailers, and distributors,

and how to refine the cheese classes we offer our customers. Each of these subjects directly relates to our job performance and gives us tools we can use to grow our businesses.

There was a lot to take in, but the options were endless on how to educate ourselves as cheese retailers. All of these teachable moments are carried back to individual stores and transferred to staff and customers. It gives me a story to tell our customers and fuels the passion for what I do. The ACS and all it offers improves the industry as a whole, and I am delighted to have been a part of that process. I feel honored that I was given such an amazing opportunity. Thank you to all those at ACS who made this experience possible!