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NexGen Reflection  
July 13, 2016

I began transitioning from a career in teaching to financial planning in 2012, and it has taken a few years to really see myself as a financial planning professional. Feeling like you are part of a profession requires confidence in domain knowledge and skills, which I don't think I'll ever stop developing. It also requires understanding how to communicate and engage with other professionals in the field, understanding where you fit within it, and collaborating with others so you can contribute your unique experience to help move the profession forward. Attending this year's NexGen Gathering was the place for me to practice and develop all of those intangible skills and perspectives, within a community of supportive and passionate planners.

En route to this year's NexGen Gathering, I looked back at my application essay for the Gathering Scholarship to revisit my goals for the weekend. I wrote, "I am very excited to meet NexGen members from across the country. I want to learn more about others' experiences in this profession in a relaxed setting that encourages meaningful dialogue and collaboration." I was able to do just that. I attended group led sessions on: financial life planning, how to form study groups, planning technology and tools, and planning for young professionals, among others. There was rarely a moment during the weekend when I wasn't in conversation with another planner. I also joined a study group of amazing planners in five different states, and we've had two energizing meetings so far.

In my application essay, I also wrote, "the diversity I see within NexGen makes me excited for the future of financial planning. I want to do whatever I can to strengthen NexGen's reach so young people across the country, and from diverse backgrounds, see financial planning as an exciting and accessible career path." Gathering did not just help me advance as a planner, it helped me consider how I can impact the field. There is so much opportunity in the financial planning profession for young people to serve. At my current organization, Compass Working Capital, I am in a position to recruit, hire, and develop financial coaches and planners from diverse backgrounds, and I know that NexGen can be a vehicle to help us succeed in this effort.

Attending this year's NexGen Gathering helped me fully see myself as a financial planner. The fact that Gathering is focused on topics important to NexGen membership, but openly welcomes planners of all ages and levels of experience, made it truly special. I believe that Gathering is an important early experience for any young planner as a springboard into our profession, and I cannot wait to see and be part of how our profession evolves. I am truly grateful to our NexGen leadership and the scholarship committee for the opportunity to attend this year's Gathering. Thank you so much for all your work.