

NACElink History

The NACElink Network, the result of an alliance among the National Association of Colleges and Employers, DirectEmployers Association, and Symplicity Corporation, is a national recruiting network and suite of web-based recruiting and career services automation tools serving the needs of colleges, employers, and job candidates.

As we entered a new millennium in the year 2000, our profession of colleges and employers recognized the need to address some significant issues for NACE members:

- Many college career offices were increasingly relying on external service providers to deliver student and employer services.
- Commercial service providers were beginning to view the students, and not the career center, as their primary customer. They were beginning to cross market other products to students and alumni through the career services systems.
- Concerns about the privacy of student data and the volume of direct marketing to students from sources outside the campus became a growing issue for higher education institutions and, in particular, for career services.
- In addition, many of these outside resources were charging increasingly higher rates for employers to post jobs, affecting employer activity in posting jobs on campuses and potentially jeopardizing the college-employer relationship.
- In some cases, career services were faced with the harsh reality that the identity of the career center was gradually being lost in the mix of commercial vendors. They lost the ability to brand their school and their office to employers.
- College career services were concerned that their mission critical activities were dependent on providers who could become involved in the buyouts and mergers of the commercial marketplace, and the schools would have little say in the process.
- Finally, in surveys of both colleges and employers, members were increasingly looking to NACE to step up and provide technology-based services to meet their needs.

Also in 2000, a group of approximately 150 employers founded DirectEmployers Association, a nonprofit organization with the following mission: to share best practices, create new industry standards, provide research, and develop and manage Internet-based systems and software for employers to increase efficiency and reduce recruiting costs. The core competencies of this organization were focused on the development and use of Internet-based technology to support recruitment and hiring. It was no coincidence that employers too were experiencing concerns similar to the colleges about privacy of data, the high cost of posting jobs on campuses through commercial service providers, and the

resulting weakening of the college-employer relationship. These same employers were also members of NACE.

Simultaneously, in 2000 NACE was reviewing the implications of the decline of print advertising in the recruiting industry and the implications that would have on the professional association and its members moving forward.

In early 2001, approached both by college and employer members to take action, NACE and DirectEmployers Association began conversations to explore how we might address these shared issues. In May 2001, after careful review of a proposal to partner with DirectEmployers Association, the NACE Board of Directors approved the NACElink initiative, a career services system offering technology for job posting, resume referral, and interview scheduling. An alliance was formed involving a group of 27 pilot schools, DirectEmployers Association, and NACE to deliver the new NACElink system. In September of 2002, NACElink was launched with a few test schools to pilot the new system. Core to the system was the strength of its customization for the schools.

The NACElink system, packaged as NACElink Connect and NACElink Custom, were publicly released in winter of 2003, followed shortly thereafter by NACElink Campus Interview, released in June of 2003. During this time, NACE staff provided the front line of customer support, while developers from DirectEmployers Association offered behind-the-scenes assistance for resolving issues and implementing new features.

One of the core intents and values of the NACElink system has been integration. From its beginning, NACElink offered value to schools and students through an integrated system of multiple school job postings. In addition, employers used a single account at all schools, a high value of integration of information and activity. This integration is a distinctive feature of the system in comparison to other service providers and is highly valued among its users.

In the summer of 2006, Symplicity Corporation, a leader in providing web-based technology solutions, joined NACE and DirectEmployers Association to form the NACElink Network. Strengthened by this additional partner, the NACElink Network prepared to launch participating NACElink Custom schools into the innovative Career Services Manager platform. In less than six months, the plan remarkably went from conception to reality. All participating NACElink schools, as well as staff at Symplicity, DirectEmployers and NACE, worked diligently to ensure a smooth transfer to CSM.

- On July 1 2006, 50 NACElink Custom user schools transitioned to NACElink's Career Services Manager or Career Services Manager Basic Edition (now Career Services Manager Modular Edition).
- In the next few months, approximately 45 schools previously using Symplicity exclusively joined the NACElink Network.
- In the same timeframe, Symplicity did the following:
 - Developed an entirely updated NACElink Connect product.
 - Designed and implemented a NACElink central site for employers.
 - Created a central management system for customer service to manage the several hundred thousand centralized employer accounts.
 - Created the ability for the new NACElink Network to handle shared multi-school job listings.

Between 2002 and 2007, the NACElink system experienced significant growth. Colleges from across the country of all types and sizes joined NACElink so that by 2007 there were 625 schools using the system. By June 2006, NACElink employer accounts had grown to 452,254 and 2,089,057 students were using the system. DirectEmployers Association grew to include 375 current members, and continues to provide the NACElink Alumni Network with thousands of job postings.

In addition, NACElink has been a critical element in NACE's strategic response to the transition from print advertising to online services, which is so widespread throughout the recruiting professions. In addition to providing higher quality service to both colleges and employers, by creating a unique collaborative model unavailable with a commercial provider, NACElink has also helped to generate the revenue necessary to support and expand the rich information-based services expected by NACE members and the many publics we serve.

Currently in 2008, the NACElink Network includes 645 campuses (with more than 40 new schools anticipated to join in the upcoming months), and the CSM user community is welcome to participate in committees such as the NACElink GO Team, the Strategic Planning Team and the Mentor Network. All NACElink CSM users are encouraged to share information and gain knowledge through the NACElink Users Listserv and the documentation section of the Extranet. In the spring of 2007, NACElink released the first edition of the NACElink CSM newsletter, "Linked." "Linked" is produced by members of the NACElink GO Team and features articles such as the "System Administrator Spotlight" and "Ask Customer Service."

Career services centers using the NACElink system today still continue to have a choice in selecting features and modules that match their distinct needs. In addition, each CSM school is assigned a dedicated account manager to improve the timing of responses to user questions and give greater access to user schools to the NACElink staff directly involved in the technical design and support of the system. To date, the new customer service platform has proved incredibly effective, providing support to all and typically keeping the number of unresolved issues below 7 percent.

NACElink network schools continue to value the opportunity to benchmark with each other and share best practices. NACElink has hosted an annual users meeting (now known as the NACElink Symposium) in Dallas, Texas, in 2005 (75 attendees), Tempe, Arizona, in 2006 (100 attendees), in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 2007(150 attendees) and we are excited to be here, in Las Vegas, Nevada, for 2008 (280+ attendees)!

Today the NACElink Network continues to grow stronger and expand while adhering to the original principles and framework established in 2000. In addition, there is an ongoing and future commitment by the NACElink Network partners to develop and launch new features that will benefit users and incorporate all career center management tools into one integrated technology system offered to all NACE members at an affordable price. Currently, as a NACElink Network participating CSM school, you can be confident that the foundation of your system is still rooted in the following core values:

- Ensuring privacy of data.
- Providing school branding/maintaining school identity.
- No direct marketing to students.
- Free job postings for employers logging in directly at your school and affordable multi-school postings.
- A continued voice in the ongoing development of CSM and the future direction of the NACElink Network.